MA'ARIFUL QUR'AN

A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran

Volume 4

By

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

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Volume 4

(Sūrah Al-A'rāf, Al-Anfāl, Al-Taubah, Yūnus and Hūd)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمدلله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على رسوله الكريم وعلى آله وصحبه اجمعين

PREFACE

The 4th Volume of Ma'ariful-Qur'an is being presented before the readers by the grace of Allah. The response of the first three volumes received from the readers belonging to different walks of life was so encouraging that the publishers had to produce several editions of these volumes within a short period. The translation of the fourth volume was initially undertaken by Mr. Muhammad Walī Raazī who has been involved in the process of the translation of the text from the very beginning of the project. He accomplished the translation of Sūrah Al-A'rāf from verse 94 to verse 199 but after that he was engaged with some other works and could not continue the translation, while Prof. Muḥammad Shameem after completing the translation of the 3rd volume was free to take up the task. Therefore, the translation from verse 200 of Sūrah Al-A'rāf upto the end of the 4th volume was accomplished by him. This volume consists of the commentary of five Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān upto the end of Sūrah Hūd.

It is for the information of the readers that the translation of the 5th volume has also been completed by Prof. Muḥammad Shameem. Its revision is also about to conclude. The 6th volume is being translated by Mr. Muhammad Ishrat Hussain, while the translation of the 7th volume is now in the hands of Prof. Muḥammad Shameem with whose remarkable speed and zeal of work it is expected to be complete very soon, Insha Allah. May Allah bless the translators with the best of rewards both here and in the hereafter, give them strength to accomplish the task entrusted to them according to His pleasure and make it beneficial for the Ummah.

Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زای -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	کاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ -- Hamzah	’
ی	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ى	: Maddah Yā	ī
وُ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Al-A'rāf

[The Heights]

Sūrah Al-A'rāf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections

Verses 94 - 95

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِىْ قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّبِىٍّ اِلَّآ اَخَذْنَآ اَهْلَهَا بِالْبَاْسَآءِ وَ
الضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضَّرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ
الْحَسَنَةَ حَتّٰى عَفَوْا وَّقَالُوْا قَدْ مَسَّ اٰبَآءَنَا الضَّرَّآءُ وَالسَّرَّآءُ
فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾

And We did not send any prophet in a town, but We seized it's people with hardship and suffering so that they may turn humble. [94] **Thereafter, We substituted good in place of evil until they increased, and said, "The suffering and prosperity came to our fathers (too)." Then We seized them suddenly while they were not aware.** [95]

The above verses continue to speak of the events of early people and their ominous fate. The events of five early prophets and their people have been so far discussed. The sixth event concerning the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people is going to be discussed after a few next verses.

We have already noted that usual style of the Holy Qur'ān with regard to the historical events is quite different from the books of history. The Holy Qur'ān does not care to describe a historical event in it's entirety or in chronological order. Rather, it selects certain relevant portion of the event then lays emphasis on the lesson or moral contained therein.

After relating the stories of the early people, the above verses speak of the warnings and lessons for present people in order to save them from the ill-fate met by their forefathers. The verse 94 warns people that the fate of disaster and suffering described in the foregoing verses was not limited to the people of Nūḥ, 'Ād and Thamūd only. It is, rather, a usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets to people for their guidance and eternal success. Then, those who do not listen to their advice and reject their invitation are subjected to suffering and distress so that they may turn to their Lord in repentance. It is human to turn to The Creator in distress. This suffering is, in fact, a blessing of Allah in disguise as it is meant for their good. The great spiritual leader Maulānā Rūmī has versified this fact in these words:

خلق را باتو چنیں بد خوکنند   تاترا ناچار روا آنسو کنند

"The people are made to misbehave with you
in order that you turn to your Lord in tears."

The verse 94 has referred to this fact by saying, 'We seized it's people with hardship so that they may turn in humbleness. The Arabic word: بَأْسَاءِ *'Ba'sa'* signifies hunger or poverty while the word: ضَرَّاءِ *'Darra'* signifies illness. The Holy Qur'ān has used these words to signify the same meanings in other situations. The respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ has confirmed these meanings of the two words. Some linguists have said that the word: بَأْسَاءِ *'Ba'sa'* refers to financial distress while the word: ضَرَّاءِ *'Ḍarra'* signifies loss of health. The verse 95 said: "Thereafter, We substituted good in place of evil until they increased."

The Arabic word: سَيِّئَة *'sayyiah'* in this verse refers to distress, while the word: حَسَنَة *'hasanah'* signifies prosperity, and the word 'Afw': عَفَوْا signifies increase or growth. The verse implies firstly that, they were made to undergo a test of hardship and suffering in order that they may repent and turn to Allah. When they did not take lesson from this warning and were a failure in this test, they were put to another test of a different kind. Their adversity was replaced with prosperity and their distress with ease and comfort until they increased in number and strength. This prosperity, after a long period of adversity, should have made them grateful to their Lord and they should have repented to Allah, but being completely lost in material pursuits and

perverted by their mundane desires, they did nothing but to say, 'The suffering and prosperity came to our fathers (too).' that is, their suffering and prosperity had nothing to do with their deeds, it was just a natural course of changing phenomena. It was after their obstinate persistence in their evil and ignorance that they were seized by the punishment of Allah. The verse said, 'Then We seized them suddenly while they were unaware.'

Verse 96 - 99

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَٰتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِنْ كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَٰهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ أَفَأَمِنَ
أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَّهُمْ نَآئِمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ أَوَ أَمِنَ أَهْلُ
الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَّهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ ۚ
فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَٰسِرُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

And if the people of the towns believed and feared Allah, We would have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth, but they disbelieved. So, We seized them for what they used to earn for themselves. [96] **So, do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them at night while they are asleep?** [97] **And do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them in broad daylight while they are at play?** [98] **So, do they feel secure from the plan of Allah? So, no one feels secure from the plan of Allah but the people who are losers.** [99]

The Arabic word بَرَكَة :'*barakah*' used in this verse and translated as blessing signifies increase or growth. The expression 'blessing of the heaven and the earth' refers to all means of prosperity, like proper and timely rain from heavens (clouds), abundant and healthy produce of the earth and, above all, carefree enjoyment from their possessions with no anxiety to spoil the pleasure of things. That is, everything would have been blessed with '*barakah*'.

The *barakah* manifests itself in two different ways. Sometimes, the thing itself increases in quantity, as is reported happening with the Holy Prophet ﷺ that a large number of people drank from a small pot of water and were satiated, or the whole army was fed to their satis-

faction from a small quantity of food. Sometimes, the quantity of thing does not increase but it's usefulness or efficacy is increased manifold. It is usually observed that a certain thing in our household lasts as long or benefits as many people as would have done three or four things of the same kind. That is to say, certain things yield lasting benefit to people while certain other things do not, or hardly serve people either due to being damaged by accident or not being accessible in times of need.

For example, sometime a single morsel of food becomes a source of great strength and health, while in some other times a large amount of food produces no results. Sometimes, we are able to do a considerable amount of work in one hour's short time, while on other occasions this amount of work can hardly be done in four or five hour's time. In these instances the thing itself did not increase. That is, the morsel of food and period of time remained as they were, their effect and benefit was, however, enhanced many times.

This verse has implicitly expressed that 'Barakah' in all the heavenly and earthly things can be achieved through the faith in Allah and by acquiring: تقوٰی '*taqwā*' (abstinence) while, in the absence of these two, one is deprived of the: برکۃ '*barakah*'. When we take in view the circumstances prevailing in today's world we notice the fact that the net produce of the earth is comparably far more than ever before. The recent inventions are at our service to ease our life in a way that could not be imagined of by past generations. But in spite of this abundance of means and resources today's man is proportionally worried, depressed, dissatisfied and as much deprived of peace and comfort as was never before.

What has deprived today's man of peace and comfort? No explanation can be given to this question except that the: برکۃ *barakah* is missing from these things. Another point which demands our attention here is that prosperity, good health and worldly possessions are not necessarily a sign of favour and blessing from Allah. Sometimes, these things are given to man out of anger as has been made clear in verse 44 of Surah Al-An'am 'which has said:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

> Then they forgot the advice they had recieved, we opened to them the doors of all good things. (6:44)

Thereafter, they were suddenly caught by the punishment of Allah. This makes us understand that prosperity and affluence of wealth are not sure signs of Allah's favour. They can sometimes, be a sign of Allah's wrath and punishment. On the contrary, the present verse leads us to conclude that: بَرَكَة *barakah* in earthly and heavenly things is a sign of Allah's favour. In order to differentiate between the two situations one must understand that prosperity and good health are sometimes, given to people against their sins and transgression. They are usually short-lived and are a sign of Allah's displeasure while on other occasions people are favoured with them with lasting benefits as a reward of 'Īmān' and '*taqwā*'. To determine as to which is a sign of favour and which a sign of displeasure is difficult as both are alike.

The men of Allah, however, have suggested some distinct signs to differentiate between the two. When prosperity and good health make man more grateful to Allah and he tends to worship His Lord more than before, it is an indication of Allah's favour. On the contrary, when one tends to be more involved in sinful deeds, it must be a sign of Allah's wrath. We seek shelter against such state of affairs.

The verses 97 to 99 have warned the people of the world saying: "So, do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them at night while they are asleep?" The verse implies that the residents of these towns (the people living in the time of the holy Prophet ﷺ seem to be unmindful of the fact that they can be caught by the punishment of Allah any time when sleeping at night. They should not feel themselves secure from the punishment of Allah which may come to them suddenly any day when they are busy in their worldly pursuits. What has made them so fearless of Allah's plan? The fate of the early people referred to in the foregoing verses should be a lesson for these people. Man should be wise enough to take lesson from the events of other people and avoid things to do which had led them to death and disaster.

Verses 100 - 102

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَهْلِهَآ اَنْ لَّوْ نَشَآءُ

اَصَبْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۚ وَنَطْبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
تِلْكَ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآئِهَا ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا بِمَا كَذَّبُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ
اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِاَكْثَرِهِمْ مِّنْ
عَهْدٍ ۚ وَاِنْ وَّجَدْنَآ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the land after it's (former) inhabitants that, if We so will, We would afflict them for their sins? And We seal their hearts so that they do not listen. [100]

Those are the towns We narrate to you of their important events. And surely their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier. This is how Allah seals the hearts of the disbelievers. [101]

And We did not find with most of them any covenant (unbroken), and surely We have found most of them sinners. [102]

After relating events of the early people, the above verses invite the people of Arabia and the people of the world to take lesson from these events by abstaining from deeds that incurred Allah's wrath, and by following the practices that led the prophets and their believers to eternal success. The verse 100 speaks " Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the land after it's (former) inhabitants that, if We so will, We would afflict them for their sins?" The word هَدٰى يَهْدِىْ signifies to guide or to inform. The events narrated above have been made the subject of the verb يَهْدِ (guide) . The verse implies that these events should serve as a lesson and a means of guidance for later generations who have inherited the land from their earlier owners. They too, can incur the punishment of Allah for their disbelief just as their ancestors met the fate of ruin and disaster for their disobedience.

Thereafter, the verse says:

وَنَطْبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ،

"And We seal their hearts so that they do not listen"

The word: طبع is used for printing or stamping. It implies that these people have taken no lesson from the past events with the result that they incurred the wrath of Allah making their hearts sealed. They are, therefore, unable to listen to the truth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said in a Tradition: "When one commits sin for the first time a black dot is placed on his heart, if he keeps committing sins for the second and third times the second and third dots are placed. If one increases in his sins without repenting to Allah, these black spots keep increasing until the whole heart is painted black." This ultimately deprives man of his natural faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. This, consequently, leads one to receive evil as good and good as evil, harmful as useful and useful as harmful.

This perversion of human understanding has been termed in the Holy Qur'ān as '*rān*' signifying the rust of the heart. In this verse, as in many other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, this stage has been named as '*ṭaba'*'. The result of their hearts being sealed has been mentioned at the end of the verse by saying (فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ) "so that they do not listen". One may think that more appropriate expression in this context was (فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ) "they do not understand" as the adverse effect of sealing of the heart is obviously related to the faculty of understanding and not to the listening. The Holy Qur'ān has used the word 'listen' to indicate that understanding is usually the result of listening to the truth. Now, since their hearts have been sealed they are rendered unable to listening the truth. Another explanation to this may be that all human faculties and limbs are controlled by human heart, that is, the function of all human parts is adversely affected by malfunctioning of the heart. When one loves any one or anything he likes everything - good or bad - in that person or object.

The verse 101 has contained the phrase تِلْكَ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَآئِهَا "these are stories of the towns that We narrate to you." The word: نَبَأ '*nabā*' in Arabic is used to denote some great news. With the word: مِنْ '*min*' the verse has indicated that the events described in these verses are only some of a large number of events bearing the same lesson. The verse has further said, "And surely, their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier." It brings out their obstinate attitude towards the prophets

who came to them with clear signs or miracles which are a definite means to decide between right and wrong but they obstinately rejected the truth, only because they had once belied them.

We know from this verse that miracles were given to all the prophets. The miracles of some prophets have been mentioned while the miracles of most of the prophets have not been referred to in the Holy Qur'ān. This does not allow one to infer that the prophets not mentioned in the Qur'ān were not given any miracles. As for the statement of the people of the prophet Hūd, appearing in Sūrah Hūd as مَاجِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ "you did not bring any clear sign", this verse has clearly indicated that their statement was simply out of their obstinacy or, may be they thought his miracles were of less significance.

Another point to be noted is that the present verse is speaking of the peculiarity of the disbelieving people who rigidly and obstinately followed the path of ignorance, only to prove that what they had once said was true, with no regard to all the clear signs and proofs of the truth. Most of the Muslims, even some 'Ulamā' (the religious scholars) are seen to have the same habit of supporting their wrong statements in the face of clear proofs of the truth. This condition is a usual cause of incurring Allah's wrath. ('Masail al Suluk')

Thereafter, the verse said كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ "This is how Allah stamps upon the hearts of the disbelievers" that is, Allah seals the hearts of those who disbelieve and reject the truth, making them unable to accept good as good. The verse 102 has said, "And We did not find with most of them any covenant (unbroken)." The Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said that the covenant referred to in this verse is the Covenant called عہدِاَلَسْتُ . That is, the covenant that Allah made with the spirits of all the creatures before creating them, when Allah said to them: اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ "Am I not your Lord?" All the human spirits entered into a covenant by answering" Yes" to the question. Most of the people forgot this covenant after they came to earth, and got involved in worshipping false gods instead of worshipping Allah. The verse, therefore, has said that Allah did not find most of the people true to this covenant. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

The respected companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ has said that the covenant referred to in this verse is the covenant of 'Īmān' the

Faith as has been indicated in the Holy Qur'ān in these words إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا "Except the one who entered into a covenant with Raḥmān (Allah), the covenant in this verse signifies the covenant of Faith. The verse, therefore, implies that most of the people deviated from their covenant with Allah. We usually note that nearly every individual when he finds himself trapped in some distress, no matter how sinful he is, turns to Allah and often makes a promise in words or in his heart that he will be faithful to Allah and obey Him and avoid disobedience if he is relieved from this calamity. But when they are out of the mess, they indulge in their mundane desires having no regard for their covenant with Allah.

The Holy Qur'ān has made mention of many of such people. It may be noted that the verse has made exception by saying 'most of them' and not 'all of them'. It is because there are people who are so perverted that even in their distress they do not turn to Allah, and they do not think of making any promise with Allah, while there are others who fulfil their promise and stay obedient to Him. At the end, the verse has the phrase "We found most of them sinners." That is, most of the people deviate from their covenant of staying obedient to Allah.

The above verses have described five events of earlier people so that present people may learn lesson from them and avoid following the course of their forefathers that led them to disaster.

Of all the events of early people described in this chapter the next event is of prophet Mūsā عليه السلام which has been described in some detail in the following verses because his miracles are larger in number and more prominent in their nature. Similarly, his people, the Israelite, were more obstinate and ignorant than other people of the world. In addition, these verses, 103-110 carry some injunctions and points of discussion.

Verses 103 - 108

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُّوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ
فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَقَالَ

مُوسٰى يٰفِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ حَقِيْقٌ
عَلٰٓى اَنْ لَّآ اَقُوْلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ ؕ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعِىَ بَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالَ اِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ
بِاٰيَةٍ فَاْتِ بِهَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَاَلْقٰى عَصَاهُ
فَاِذَا هِىَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَّنَزَعَ يَدَهٗ فَاِذَا هِىَ بَيْضَآءُ
لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

Then after them We sent Mūsā عليه السلام **with Our signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs then , they did injustice to them. So, look, how was the fate of the mischief-makers.** [103] **And Mūsā** عليه السلام **said ,"O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds,** [104] **worthy of saying nothing about Allah except the truth. I have come to you with a clear sign from your Lord. So, let the children of Isrā'īl go with me."** [105] **He said, "If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are one of the truthful."** [106] **So he threw down his staff, and it was a serpent, manifest;** [107] **and drew out his hand, and it was a white light to the onlookers.** [108]

The verse 103, has said that after the prophets Nūḥ, Hud, Ṣaliḥ, Luṭ and Shu'aib, We sent Mūsā عليه السلام with Our signs towards Pharaoh and his people. The 'signs' may refer to the verses of the Torah or to the miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام . The word Pharaoh was the title of Egyptian kings. The Pharaoh of Mūsā's time is said to be Mernephtah. The phrase فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا "they did injustice to them (signs)" here means that they showed indifference to the verses of Allah, instead of being grateful to Him and having faith in them they rejected His verses. The word ظلم rendered as wrong or injustice, in fact, signifies the use of something for a purpose opposite to what it was created for. Further it said فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ "So look how was the fate of mischief-makers." Again the people are invited to take lesson from these events and think of their own fate.

The verse is a clear declaration of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام before Pharaoh that he was a messenger of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and that his status of prophethood does not allow him to ascribe

anything but truth to Allah because the message given to the prophets by Allah is a sacred trust and it is a great sin to tamper with it. All the prophets of Allah are free of all sins and cannot do so. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام tried to convince them that they should believe him because his truthfulness was beyond question and that he had never uttered a word of lie. In addition to this, his miracles are a clear proof to support his claim to prophethood.

In the light of these clear signs he must believe him and let the children of Isrā'īl go with him free of his illegitimate surveillance. The Pharaoh, out of his obstinacy, did not listen to anything, but demanded saying, " If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are among the truthful," إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَآ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, in response to his demand, threw down his staff on the earth, instantly it turned into a serpent: فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ The word *'thu'bān'* in Arabic signifies a huge serpent. The use of the word *'mubīn'* as an adjective which means 'clear or prominent' is quite descriptive of the fact that this miraculous event took place manifestly before the eyes of the people of the Pharaoh, and it was not performed secretly in a hidden or secluded place as is usually done by magicians. In some historical traditions it has been cited on the authority of the Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that as the serpent moved towards Pharaoh, he jumped from his throne and sought shelter near the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and many of his courtiers died of extreme fear. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

Transformation of the staff into a real serpent is not, in fact, totally impossible as it apparently seems. It is, however, surprising due to being unusual. The miracle has to be an unusual act, beyond the power of a common individual. Allah shows the miracles through His prophets to make people understand that they possess some divine powers and are true prophets of Allah. Thereafter, the verse (7:108) said, وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَآءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ 'And he drew out his hand, and it was white light to the onlookers.'

The Arabic word: نزع *naza'a* signifies extracting something from another thing with force. Here this word indicates that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام applied some force while drawing out his hand. The verse does not speak of a place from where he drew out his hand. In

other verses, however, we find mention of two things. In a verse (27:12) we find the words أَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ 'enter your hand under your robe.' The other verse (20:22) contains the words (وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ) 'put your hand under your arm.' The two phrases indicate that he used to draw out his hand either from under his arm or from under his shirt. Arabic word: بَيْضَاءُ '*bayḍā*' means white. The whiteness of hand may also be due to some disease, it is perhaps, why the Holy Qur'ān has added the words 'without an evil' in other (28:32, 27:12) verse to eliminate any possible doubt of a disease. We know from a Tradition reported by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه that this whiteness was not of ordinary kind. It had light that illuminated the whole surrounding. (Qurṭubī) The Arabic word '*nāẓirīn*' signifying the 'onlookers or viewers' indicates that this light was so surprising for the people that they gathered to see it.

The prophet Mūsā علیه السلام performed two miracles at this occasion on the demand of the Pharaoh. First, the transformation of his staff into a serpent, second, drawing his hand out from under his arm, emanating light from it. The first was to serve as warning for the unbelievers while the second aimed at inviting them to the truth. It also indicated that the message of the prophet Mūsā was a light and to follow it would lead people to eternal success.

Verses 109 - 110

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

The chiefs of the people of the Pharaoh said, "This man is certainly a sorcerer of great knowledge. [109] **He wants to expel you from your land. So, what do you suggest ?"** [110]

The Arabic word 'Mala" is used for influential chiefs. After seeing these miracles they said to the people he was a great sorcerer. Being ignorant of divine powers of Allah they could say nothing else as they believed Pharaoh to be their god and had seen nothing but the magical charms of the sorcerers in their life. They, however, added the word "*alīm*' signifying the one who knows, showing their impression that the

miraculous acts of Mūsā عليه السلام were of the kind that could not be performed by an ordinary magician. So, they said that he was a sorcerer of great knowledge.

The difference between miracle and sorcery

The miracles and sorcery are so distinct in their nature and effect that they do not require any explanation to any one applying common sense. The sorcerers usually live in impurity and, the more they are unclean and impure the more they are successful in their sorcery. The prophets, on the other hand, are by nature the most clean and pure people. Another obvious distinction is that a sorcerer is never successful when he makes claim to prophethood. Besides, the acts performed under the effect of sorcery do have physical causes as other things have, with the only difference that their causes remain hidden to common people. The people, therefore, take them to be happening without the help of any cause. On the contrary, the miracles are directly a manifestation of Allah's power and have nothing to do with physical causes. This is why the miracles have been ascribed directly to Allah and not to the prophets in the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ān said "but Allah threw the pebbles" (while these pebbles were thrown by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the battle of Badr) In short, the miracles and sorcery are totally different from each other. The people of knowledge have no confusion about it. In order to eliminate any possible confusion of a common individual, Allah has provided with obvious distinctions between the two.

Even the people of the Pharaoh found the miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام somehow different from the normal acts of sorcerers. Therefore, even while accusing him of sorcery they admitted that he was 'of great knowledge' meaning that his act was not comparable with the acts of the normal sorcerers.

Verses 111- 122

قَالُوْٓا اَرْجِهْ وَاَخَاهُ وَاَرْسِلْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿١١١﴾
يَاْتُوْكَ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَجَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوْٓا
اِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَاِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ

الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰى اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ
نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالَ اَلْقُوْا فَلَمَّآ اَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوْٓا اَعْيُنَ
النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوْهُمْ وَجَآءُوْ بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَ اَوْحَيْنَآ
اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ
﴿١١٧﴾ فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَغُلِبُوْا
هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوْا صٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَاُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ
﴿١٢٠﴾ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٢﴾

They said, "leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect [111] **and bring to you every expert sorcerer."** [112]

And the sorcerers came to Pharaoh. They said, "There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors." [113] **He said, "yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones."** [114] **They said, "O Mūsā** عليه السلام**, either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw?" He said, "You throw."** [115]

So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and produced great sorcery. [116] **And We revealed to Mūsā, 'Throw your staff." Then of a sudden, it began to swallow all that they had concocted.** [117]

So, the truth prevailed, and what they were doing became a nullity. [118] **So, they were overcome there and turned humiliated.** [119] **And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration.** [120] **They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds,** [121] **the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn."** [122]

These verses narrate the remaining part of the story of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Seeing these wonders of staves turning into serpents and making his hand emitting strong white light, the Pharaoh should have been convinced and have believed in Mūsā عليه السلام as the logic

and sense demanded. But it is the common practice of the wrong-doers that they always seek false interpretations of the truth in order to conceal it, the Pharaoh and his people belied him instead, and said to the people that he was a great sorcerer and that he wanted to expel them from their homes and take over the rule of the country. The people of the Pharaoh suggested:

أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حَاشِرِيْنَ - يَأْتُوْكَ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ (١١١-١١٢)

"leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect and bring to you every expert sorcerer-111,112."

The people of the Pharaoh said that there were many expert sorcerers in their cities who were capable of defeating Mūsā عليه السلام.

Some soldiers should be sent to collect and bring the sorcerers for this purpose. Sorcery and magic, being the custom of the day, the sorcerers enjoyed a high status among people. Allah sent Mūsā عليه السلام with the miracles of the staff and white-lit hand so that people may clearly observe the misery of the sorcerers after entering into a contest with Mūsā عليه السلام. It is the usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets with miracles that are appropriate to the demand of the time. For instance, in the time of the prophet 'Īsā (the Jesus), Greek philosophy and medical sciences were at their zenith. He was, therefore, sent with the miraculous powers of restoring the sight of those who were born blind and cure the lepers instantly with a touch of his hand. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the Arabs were boastful of their oratory and linguistic capabilities. The Holy Qur'ān was sent as the greatest of all miracles of the Holy prophet. It's diction and style so bewildered the Arabs that they instantly acknowledged a super human element in it. The sorcerers came to Pharaoh and said:

إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِيْنَ

"There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors." (113)

He said,

نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ

"Yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones." (114)

The sorcerers were invited from all over the country. When they all

came to Pharaoh they asked him of some reward if they gain victory over Mūsā عليه السلام . He promised that in addition to their reward they shall be included among those close to him. The historical reports about the number of these sorcerers give us different information. These give us a number from nine hundred to three hundred thousand. The quantity of the staves and strings used in this contest is reported to be as great as was loaded on three hundred camels. (Qurṭubī)

It may be noted that the first thing the sorcerers did, was to have an assurance about the reward they will get in return of their performance. It is because worldly people are always after worldly gains. They do nothing unless they are sure of their gains, while on the contrary, the prophets and their disciples always declare:

وَمَآ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍۚ اِنْ اَجْرِىَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

I do not ask you for a reward, as my reward is with the Lord of all the worlds.' (26:109)

That is, the prophets of Allah preach and convey the message of Allah only for the good and guidance of people and they seek no financial gain against it. They seek their reward from Allah alone. After this discourse with Pharaoh the sorcerers got the place and date fixed for the great encounter. An open land was chosen for the purpose and the time was fixed after the sunrise on their festival Day. It is also mentioned in a verse of the Holy Qur'ān: Mūsā عليه السلام said: قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى "your appointed day is the day of '*zīnah*' so that people may be gathered after sunrise." (20:59)

Some reports say that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had a short conversation with the chief of the sorcerers and asked him if they would accept the faith in case he defeated them? He said that there was no question of their being defeated as they possessed such great magical powers that could not be overcome by any one. And in case 'you bring defeat to us we shall declare our faith openly in the presence of the Pharaoh'. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī)

They said,

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِىَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ

"O Mūsā either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw."

The Arabic word: إلقاء *'ilqā'* means to drop something down. On the day of encounter the sorcerers asked the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام if he would drop down his staff first or should they throw theirs first? This question of the sorcerers was perhaps to show their complacency about their art, though the mode of their sentence indicated that they wanted to start first, but for giving an impression of power to their opponent they put that question. Since the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had nothing to fear about, he invited them saying 'you drop.'

Ibn Kathīr has said that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام behaved with them politely by inviting them to have their turn first. The effect of this behaviour was that they accepted the faith after their defeat. Here we are faced with a question. The sorcery is an impermissible act, specially when it is used to oppose a prophet sent by Allah it becomes an act of infidelity. How then the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام gave permission of magic to the sorcerers by saying 'you drop'? With a little thought we can find the answer. It was certain that the sorcerers will show their magic by all means. The point of conversation was to decide who should start the contest. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام allowed them to begin. Another advantage of this strategy was that the people could see their performance and the sorcerers had all the time to show their art and turn the staves into snakes. Then the staff of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام should turn into a serpent and eat up all the snakes, thus the open defeat of magic should be exhibited before the people. (Bayān- al- Qur'ān)

فَلَمَّآ اَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوْٓا اَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوْهُمْ وَجَآءُوْا بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيْمٍ

So, when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and came out with great sorcery. (116)

This verse indicates that this demonstration of their magic was just a bewitching of the eyes of the people which made them see the staffs and strings as snakes leaping on the ground, while the strings and the staffs did not change physically. It was a kind of mesmerism hypnotising the minds of the onlookers. This does not mean that sorcery is confined only in this kind and that it cannot change something into another, as we do not have any proof against it. On the contrary, many forms and kinds of magic have been taken as being

reality. The terms magic and sorcery are usually applied for all the acts that seem to be happening in unusual way. Sleight of hand, telepathic influences and mesmerism are sometimes called magic. Transformation of one thing into another through magic may be a possibility but we have no valid reason or proof for or against it.

The next verse 117 said, وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ "And We revealed to Mūsā 'Throw your staff.' Then, of a sudden it began to swallow all that they had concocted." We find it reported in history, when thousands of staffs and ropes were turned into snakes leaping all over the ground, Allah commanded Mūsā عليه السلام to drop down his staff on the ground. It turned into a great snake and instantly began to eat up the snakes of the sorcerers. The crowd stood bewildered and stunned at this sight. Within no time all the snakes were eaten up by the great snake of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Next, the verse said:

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝ فَغُلِبُوا هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صَاغِرِينَ ۝ وَأُلْقِيَ
السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ ۝ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ۝

"So, the truth prevailed and what they were doing became a nullity. So there they were overcome and turned humiliated. And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration. They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn."

The sorcerers were so overawed by the miracle of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام that they fell in prostration. This may also imply that Allah blessed them with favour and put them in prostration. They added the phrase, the Lord of Mūsā عليه السلام and Harun after saying, the Lord of the worlds, to make it clear that the Lord worshipped by Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn is, in fact, the Lord of the Universe, and not the Pharaoh as he pretended to be.

Verses- 123 - 127

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَكَرْتُمُوهُ فِي
الْمَدِينَةِ لِتُخْرِجُوا مِنْهَا أَهْلَهَا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ
أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ قَالُوا

إِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا تَنقِمُ مِنَّآ إِلَّآ أَنْ ءَامَنَّا بِـَٔايَٰتِ رَبِّنَا
لَمَّا جَآءَتْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَآ أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَقَالَ
الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَذَرُ مُوسَىٰ وَقَوْمَهُۥ لِيُفْسِدُوا۟ فِى الْأَرْضِ
وَيَذَرَكَ وَءَالِهَتَكَ ۚ قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْىِۦ نِسَآءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا
فَوْقَهُمْ قَٰهِرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

The Pharaoh said, "You have believed in him before I permitted you. No doubt, this is a device you have devised in the city, so that you may expel it's people from there. Now you shall know (it's end). [123] **I shall certainly, cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides. Then I shall crucify you all together."** [124] **They said, "We are surely to return to our Lord.** [125] **You punish us for no other reason but that we have believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. "O our Lord, pour out patience upon us and let the death take us while we are Muslims (the faithful)."** [126]

And the chiefs of the people of the Pharaoh said, "Do you leave Mūsā عليه السلام and his people that they spread disorder in the land while he leaves you and your gods?" He said, " We shall slaughter their sons and let their women live. And we have full power over them." [127]

The foregoing verses had a detailed account of the contest between the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the sorcerers and that after their defeat the sorcerers declared their faith in Allah. Some historical reports say that subsequent to their declaration of faith in Allah, six hundred thousand more people followed suit and declared their belief in Allah. Before this open contest there were only two individuals believing in Allah. Now a great army of people became Muslims. It was, obviously an embarrassing situation for the Pharaoh. Like a clever politician he managed to conceal his state of mind before the people, and changed the situation by putting the blame of conspiracy and rebellion on the sorcerers. He claimed that they had joined hands with Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn in order to create disorder in the country. Then he said to the sorcerers, "You have believed in him before I permitted you." This was a threat to the sorcerers on the one hand, and on the other, he tried to convince his people that the sorcerers made a hasty decision in

accepting their faith and fell prey to the trap of Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn. Otherwise, he would have also believed in him in case Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn proved truthful in their claim.

It was a clever design of Pharaoh. He tried to keep his people stay in their former ignorance and make people believe that the contest was pre-plotted between the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the sorcerers. He cleverly twisted the fact that the miracle of Mūsā عليه السلام and the open conversion of the sorcerers to the true Faith was purely to expose the ignorance and falsehood of the Pharaoh. He turned it into a political issue by saying, "So that you may expel it's people from there." He wanted to make his people believe that they planned the whole matter to gain power over the country and expel the people from there.

After making all these strategic statements he threatened the sorcerers, first, with an indefinite remark saying, "Now you shall know (your end)". Further specifying the threat, He said, لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ "I shall surely, cut your hands and legs from the opposite sides. Then I shall crucify you all together." By cutting from the opposite sides he meant the right hand and the left foot so that they are made completely disabled and invalid.

The Pharaoh made all the efforts that he could to control his people. The belief in Allah, or "Īmān' as it is called by the Qur'ān, is a great power. When it finds it's way into one's heart, one finds himself as powerful as to face the whole world and all the forces gathered together against him. This was a great change. Only a few hours ago, the sorcerers were the worshippers of Pharaoh, but having faith in Allah they demonstrated such a great power and courage that in response to all the threats to their lives by the Pharaoh, they only said with perfect satisfaction that, in that case, إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنقَلِبُونَ "To our Lord we are sure to return."

The sorcerers were fully aware of Pharaoh's power and authority over them. They did not say that Pharaoh will not be able to kill them because of their new faith. Their answer was to suggest that the whole life of this temporary world had no value in their eyes. Their satisfaction was due to the fact that they were sure of meeting the Lord of the worlds after passing away from this world. There they shall get an everlasting life of peace and comfort.

Another interpretation of their answer is that though the Pharaoh had all the power to finish their life, but soon he will be presented before the Lord of the worlds where he shall be taken to account for his despotism. In another verse, the following statement is also included in the answer of the sorcerers, فَاقْضِ مَآ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ اِنَّمَا تَقْضِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا "You may pass any judgement you can against us, but your judgement will be restricted to this worldly life." (72:20) This also shows their total indifference towards the temporary life of this world. This great change in their thought and action was the result of their true faith in Allah. In addition to this, their faith opened the door of knowledge and wisdom upon them which is manifest from their invocation to Allah at this occasion. They prayed, رَبَّنَآ اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَّ تَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِيْنَ "O Allah! Shower upon us patience and let death take us while we are Muslims." This prayer is not only a manifestation of knowledge and wisdom, but also the best means of getting out of the difficulty they were in. It is because perseverance and patience are the only keys to success over one's enemy.

The report of the commission formed for investigating the causes and effects of the World War has remarked that the Muslims who observe faith in Allah and in the Hereafter are the most valiant and brave people in the battle field, and the most patient in the times of difficulty because they have faith in Allah and in the Hereafter. This is why the German military officials, expert in military sciences, emphatically suggested that they should create honesty and sense of accountability in the Hereafter among their soldiers, as they are the great source of strength and courage. (Tafsīr al-Manār)

It Was A Miracle

The instant perfect change of mind of the sorcerers was, in no way, a lesser miracle than the other miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام Those who led a life of infidelity and ignorance for their whole life were instantly changed into the most cognizant, knowledgeable and true Muslims, as faithful as to readily sacrifice their life for their faith. It is a pity that the Muslims and the Muslim states are trying all other ways and means to make themselves powerful and strong, but have become neglectful of the real source of power and strength. That is faith, perseverance and patience.

Pharaoh was frightened

It is to be noted that the Pharaoh was in some degree successful in keeping his ignorant people in their former ignorance through his clever and false statements, but at the same time, they strangely noted that all the fury and rage of Pharaoh was limited to the sorcerers only. He did not dare say a word against the prophets Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn who were his real opponents. This is obvious from the following statement of his people: اَتَذَرُ مُوسٰى وَقَوْمَهٗ لِيُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَاٰلِهَتَكَ "Do you leave Mūsā عليه السلام and his people alone to spread disorder in the land, even when he abandons you and your gods?"

Pharaoh had no convincing answer to this question. He only said, سَنُقَتِّلُ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيٖ نِسَآءَهُمْ وَاِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قٰهِرُوْنَ "We shall slaughter their sons and let their women live, and we have full power over them."

According to the commentators of the Holy Qur'ān, Pharaoh tried to satisfy his people saying that by killing their males and leaving their women alive, he shall totally eliminate them within a period of time. Their women shall be spared to serve his people as maid servants. In fact, Pharaoh was so frightened by the miracle of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام that even at this occasion when he was threatening to kill all the men of Israelites, he could not utter a single word of threat against Mūsā and Hārūn عليهم السلام Maulānā Rūmī said :

هرکه ترسید از حق و تقوی گزید

ترسید ازوي جن و انس و هرکه دید

"Whoever adopts 'Taqwā' and fears Allah is feared by all human beings and spirits" .

The above statement of Pharaoh's people, 'Even when he abandons you and your gods' makes us understand that Pharaoh himself used to worship other gods, even though he claimed to be the god of his people. The law about killing of the males of the Israelites and leaving their women alive was now promulgated the second time. The first time it was put into force prior to the birth of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. He was witnessing the failure of this law up to this day which was evident from the huge crowd of the Israelites present at this occasion. When

Allah intends to bring disgrace to a people, all they contrive leads to nothing but disaster. We shall soon see that this tyranny and oppression, at last, led him and his people to an ignominious end.

Verses 128-132

قَالَ مُوسٰى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاصْبِرُوْا ۚ اِنَّ الْاَرْضَ لِلّٰهِ
يُوْرِثُهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ۭ وَ الْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾
قَالُوْٓا اُوْذِيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِيَنَا وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا ۭ قَالَ
عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ
فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِيْنَ
وَ نَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوْا لَنَا هٰذِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّطَّيَّرُوْا بِمُوْسٰى وَمَنْ
مَّعَهٗ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّمَا طٰٓئِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿١٣١﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَهْمَا تَاْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا ۙ فَمَا نَحْنُ
لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And Mūsā said to his people," "Seek help from Allah and be patient. Surely, the land belongs to Allah. He lets whomsoever He wills, from among His slaves, inherit it. And the end-result is in favour of the God-fearing." [128] **They said, "We were persecuted before you came to us, as well as, after you have come to us." He said, "It is likely that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the earth, then He will see how you act."** [129]

And We seized the people of the Pharaoh with years of famine and loss of fruits, so that they may take lesson. [130] **So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know.** [131]

And they said, "whatever sign you bring to us to

enchant us therewith, we are not going to believe in you." [132]

After being defeated by the prophet Mūsā, عليه السلام Pharaoh enforced the law of killing the male children of the Israelites. They were greatly alarmed of the punishment they had experienced before the coming of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was also mindful of this fact. Out of his kindness, he offered two wise solutions to the Israelites. He said to them that only way of getting out of this trial was, firstly, to seek help from Allah and, secondly, to remain patient until the things change into their favour. He also promised them that they shall inherit the whole land if they faithfully observed the two instructions. This is what the verse said: اِسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاصْبِرُوْا اِنَّ الْاَرْضَ لِلّٰهِ يُوْرِثُهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ "Seek help from Allah and be patient; surely, the land belongs to Allah, He lets whomsoever He wills inherit it, from among his servants." This implies that all the lands belong to Allah, and He lets whomsoever He wills inherit the land. And decidedly the end result is for the God-fearing. So, if they observe 'Taqwā' (keep away from disobedience) by acting upon the two instruction offered above they shall ultimately rule the whole country.

The Only Way To Success

A little reflection over the above two teachings of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام will show that it is the sovereign remedy which never fails against any difficulty. The first ingredient of this recipe is seeking help from Allah which is the essence of the remedy. It is for the obvious reason that if the Creator of the universe comes to one's help who is there to stop Him? Maulānā Rūmī said in a couplet:

خاك و بادو آب وآتش بنده اند

بامن وتو مرده باحق زنده اند

"The earth, the air, the water and the fire, all are servants of Allah. To me and to You they are dead, but to Allah they are full of life."

It is reported in a Ḥadīth: When Allah wills to do something everything turns in favour of that purpose. Therefore, nothing is more powerful against an enemy than seeking Allah's help with all the sincerity of one's heart. Simply uttering out some formula words for seeking help are not enough.

The second important ingredient of the recipe is being patient. The Arabic word 'Ṣabr' rendered as patience literally signifies to keep oneself under one's control against unfavourable happenings. It is common knowledge that nothing significant can be achieved without undergoing difficulties and hardships. One who readily prepares himself to face hardships is generally successful in most of his objectives. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said in a Tradition, "No greater blessing has been given to any one other than patience." (Abū Dāwūd)

The Israelites who seemed to have no conception of such matters could not understand how patience alone could free them from Pharaoh's punishment and bring them success against him. They blamed the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام saying:

قَالُوْٓا اُوْذِيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِيَنَا وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا

'We have been persecuted before you came to us as well as after you came to us."

What they meant, perhaps, was that they were looking for a prophet to deliver them from the oppression of the Pharaoh, but their fate remained unchanged even after he came to them. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام answered to them:

عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ

'It is likely that your Lord will destroy your enemy and māke you successors in the earth that He may see how then, you act.'

Sovereignty is a test

The last phrase of the verse has provided with a wise observation that sovereignty or dominion is not in itself an aim or objective but a means to achieve the objective of making peace and justice prevail in the land. Sovereignty or dominion is a sacred trust bestowed upon by Allah for making good prevail over evil. The verse has warned them that, in case they are bestowed this trust, they should not forget the ill fate of those who were before them.

Though the direct addressee of the verse are the Israelites, but indirectly the verse has thrown a warning to all those trusted with rule or dominion. Sovereignty or power, in fact, belongs to Allah alone. Allah has made man his deputy on the earth. He is the One who desig-

nates man with power and takes it away when He so wills. This is what the following verse means:

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ

"You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please." (3:26)

The power and rule, therefore, is a test for the rulers to see how far they have fulfilled their duty of establishing peace and justice and making good prevail over evil.

Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr-al Muḥīṭ has included the following event under the comments on this verse: 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid once visited Manṣūr, the second caliph of the Abbaside dynasty, prior to his designation to caliphate and recited this verse: 'It is likely that Allah will destroy your enemy and make you successor in the earth.' This was a sort of prediction by 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid of his succession to the throne. Soon after Manṣūr succeeded to the throne and became the Caliph. 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid came to the Caliph again. Manṣūr reminded him of the prediction made by him. Amr ibn 'Ubaid instantly answered, "Well, the first part of the prediction has come true and you have become the Caliph, but the second part of it still remains unfulfilled. The verse also contains this phrase, فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ "Then, He will see how you act." Amr ibn 'Ubaid suggested that gaining power is not a matter of pride because thereafter, Allah judges the acts of those in authority and sees how they make use of this trust.

The next verses speak of the events that led Pharaoh and his people to a number of calamities sent to them as punishment and finally led them to their death. The first heavenly punishment came to them in the form of famine. According to historical reports this famine lasted for seven years.

"And We seized the people of the Pharaoh with years of famine and loss of fruits, so that they may take lesson. So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā عليه السلام and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know."

The first verse has described the famine with two phrases: 'years of

famine' and 'loss of fruits.' The respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and the commentator Qatādah have said that the punishment of drought was for the people of the rural areas, while people living in cities and towns were punished by the loss of fruits. When a people are stamped with the wrath of Allah they lose their faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. Pharaoh and his people too, had lost their understanding. They did not take lesson from this warning. On the contrary, they ascribed the calamity to be a bad presage from the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. The verse said, 'So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā عليه السلام and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know."

The Arabic word: طَائِر 'Ṭā'ir' used for omen signifies a bird. The Arabs had a superstition that a bird coming down to their right or left meant a good or bad fate. The verse implies that good or bad fate comes from Allah. Everything in this world happens under the will of Allah. No one is there to bring good or bad fate to any one. It is sheer ignorance to believe in such things and base their activities on such baseless assumptions. The last verse describes their rejection of the truth in these words:

And they said, مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 'Whatever sign you bring to us in order to enchant us therewith, we are not going to believe in you."

Verses 133 - 136

فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوْفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ
اٰيٰتٍ مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَمَّا
وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ
عِنْدَكَ ۚ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ
بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ هُمْ
بٰلِغُوْهُ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ فِى

الِيمَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

So We sent upon them the storm and locusts, and pests, frogs and blood, signs distinct from each other. Yet they showed arrogance and they were a guilty people. [133] **And when the punishment fell upon them, they said, "O Mūsā, pray for us to your Lord by the covenant He has made with you. If you remove the punishment from us, we shall surely believe in you and shall send the children of Isrā'īl with you."** [134]

So when We removed the punishment from them, for a period of time that they had to reach, they suddenly started to break the promise. [135] **Then we took vengeance from them, and drowned them in the sea, for they belied Our signs and were neglectful of them.** [136]

The above verses relate the next part of the story of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the people of Pharaoh. According to historical reports, the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام stayed in Egypt for 20 years. He kept preaching consistently and conveyed the message of Allah to them. He was given nine miracles during his stay in Egypt which served as warnings to the people of Pharaoh. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to the nine miracles in these words. وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ "Surely, We gave him nine miracles."

Out of the nine miracles, two were performed before Pharaoh and his people. The third miracle was of famine reported in verse 130. The above verses speak of the remaining six miracles. The verse 133 has mentioned five punishments coming to the people of Pharaoh. All these punishments have been termed as 'signs distinct from each other.' According to the comments of the respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās each of these punishments lasted for a fixed period of time followed by a period of relief followed by the next punishment.

Ibn-al-Mundhir has cited from the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that each punishment lasted for seven days starting from Saturday, then they were given three weeks of relief. Imām al-Baghawī, citing the Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas said that the first time when they were relieved of famine by asking the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to pray

Allah for their relief, they did not keep the promise of believing in Allah. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah that they may be inflicted with some painful punishment so that it serves as a lesson to his people and to their descendants. Allah first sent a storm upon them. According to great commentators, this was a flood. All the lands and houses of the people of Pharaoh were filled and surrounded by the water leaving for them no place for farming and living in their homes. The strange thing about it was that the lands and houses of the Israelites were not affected by the water of the flood.

In a state of great distress they came to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and reqtested him to pray Allah for their relief from this calamity. They promised that if they are relieved from the flood they would embrace faith in Allah and let the Israelites go with him from Egypt. The prayer of the prophet was acceded to and the storm subsided. It is reported that their fields were more fertile and productive than before. Again they did not keep their promise and said that the storm was not a punishment from Allah. Rather it came to their benefit and the increase in the produce was the result of the flood and that Mūsā عليه السلام had nothing to do with it.

A period of respite was given to them to reflect and realize their error. After a period of one month another punishment was sent to them in the form of locusts which ate up all the crops and fruits. Some reports say that the locusts devoured even their doors and roofs made of wood and other things of their houses. Again they were surprised to notice that the locusts did not do any harm to the houses and fields of the Israelites which were quite close to them. Once again they cried for help and implored to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to pray his Lord for taking away this punishment from them and that they make firm promise to believe in him and free the Israelites after their relief. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah for their relief again and they got rid of this chastisement.

Seeing that they were left with enough grain to suffice them for one year, they turned against their promise and showed arrogance as before. Once again, a period of peace and relief followed. The third punishment came to them of 'Qummal' rendered here as pest. Qummal in Arabic is used for 'louse' as well as for an insect which eats up

grain. It is possible that both kinds of insects were sent to them, that is, small pests started to eat up their grain while equally large number of lice ate up even their hair and eyelashes. Exasperated as they were, they came again to prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and asked him to pray Allah for their riddance, promising again their acceptance of the true faith and release of the Israelites. He prayed Allah for their relief and Allah relieved them of this punishment too.

The fourth punishment was of the frogs. The frogs were created in such a large number in their houses that they covered them up to their necks. The frogs covered them in their beds when they came to sleep. All of their cooking pans and utensils and their household were full of frogs. Being highly disgusted with this situation they came again to prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, with all their old promises, and asked him to pray for their deliverance. This time also they were relieved of this punishment. They were given enough time to correct themselves but those who incur Allah's wrath are deprived of positive thinking. This time when they were in peace they said that they were sure that Mūsā عليه السلام was a sorcerer and not a messenger of Allah. Those mishaps to them were the effect of his sorcery.

After a month of relief the next punishment visiting them was that of blood. Everything of their use turned into blood. Their drinks, their food and their water became all blood before they could use them. As they took out water from the wells or tanks it turned into blood. History has reported it was strange that whenever the Egyptians and the Israelites sat together for meal the morsel of food taken by the Egyptian became all blood, while the one taken by an Israelite did not change. This punishment too lasted for seven days. They were relieved of this punishment through the prayer of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام after their usual false promises.

The people of Pharaoh were subjected to the above five punishments one after another but they persisted in their arrogance and showed no sign of taking lesson from these warnings. The sixth punishment has been mentioned in the Qur'ān by the Arabic word: رجز 'Rijz' which signifies plague or pestilence. The number of Egyptians killed in this plague is reported to have been more than seventy thousand. They were relieved of this punishment by the prayer of the

prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Again they broke their promise as before. Now, when they showed no sign of understanding they were finally caught by the last punishment - the death. Leaving behind all their lands, houses and possessions they chased the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people and were drowned in the sea.

Verse 137 - 141

وَاَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا يُسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ مَشَارِقَ الْاَرْضِ
وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ۭ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنٰى عَلٰى
بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا ۭ وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ
وَقَوْمُهٗ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَجٰوَزْنَا بِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ
الْبَحْرَ فَاَتَوْا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ يَّعْكُفُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَصْنَامٍ لَّهُمْ ۚ قَالُوْا
يٰمُوْسَى اجْعَلْ لَّنَآ اِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ ۭ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ
﴿١٣٨﴾ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيْهِ وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
﴿١٣٩﴾ قَالَ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِيْكُمْ اِلٰهًا وَّهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَاِذْ اَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ
سُوْۗءَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ يُقَتِّلُوْنَ اَبْنَاۗءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ نِسَاۗءَكُمْ ۭ وَفِيْ
ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَاۗءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٤١﴾

And We made those people who were taken as weak, the inheritors of the easts of the land and of it's wests which We had blessed. And the sublime word of your Lord was fulfilled for the children of Isrā'īl, because they stood patient. And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people used to build and what they used to raise high. [137]

And We made the children of Isrā'īl cross the sea, then, they came across a people sitting in devotion before their idols. They (the Israelites) said, "O Mūsā, make a god for us like they have gods." He said, "You are really an ignorant people. [138] **What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed; and false is what they**

are doing." [139] **He said, "Shall I seek any one other than Allah as God for you, while He has given you excellence over the (people of all the) worlds."** [140] **And (remember) when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh, who inflicted you with grievous torment, slaughtered your sons and left your women alive and in all that there was great trial from your Lord.** [141]

The previous verses contained an account of the warnings from Allah to the people of Pharaoh. The present verses speak of their ignominious end, and of the success of the Israelites. The verse 137 said, "And We made the people, who were taken to be weak, the inheritors of the land, of easts and wests which We had blessed." The verse did not say, the people who were weak, rather it said, those who were taken as weak. It implies that those having Allah as their support can never be weak in the real sense of the word, though they may seem so from their apparent condition. People finally come to realise that they are not weak. It is because dignity and honour all belong to Allah. The verse has used the term inheritance for their domination in the land to indicate that like a son who deserves to be a real inheritor of his father's land and possessions, the Israelites were the real inheritors of the land and wealth of Pharaoh's people.

The words 'east' and 'west' have been used in plural perhaps to denote the different points of sunset and sunrise in winter and summer time. The word 'land', according to all experts in exegesis, refers to the land of Egypt and Syria which was brought under the domination of the Israelites after the people of Pharaoh and the Amaleks were destroyed. The phrase 'Which We had blessed' refers to the lands of Syria and Egypt. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to Syria as the land of Barakah (blessing). Similarly the land of Egypt has been referred to as the land of blessing in a number of Traditions. The Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb has referred to river Nile as the prince of all rivers. The Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar said that Egypt has nine parts of blessing out of ten. The tenth part has been divided throughout the earth. (Al-Baḥr-a-Muḥīṭ)

In short, the verse has to say that the people who were considered weak and abject were made the rulers of the land possessed by those who showed arrogance. It shows how the promise made by Allah and

His Messenger came out true as it always does. The verse said, 'The sublime word of your Lord was fulfilled.' The promise in this verse either refers to the promise made by the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام with his people mentioned in verse 129 which said, 'It is very likely that our Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successor in the earth.' Or it refers to the promise made by Allah to the Israelites in a verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ (the Stories) It said, "

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَّنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ۙ وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ ۝

"And it was Our will that We favour those considered weak in the earth and make them leaders, and make them the inheritors, and give them power in the land, and show Pharaoh, Hāmān and their armies, the very thing they dreaded." (28:5)

In fact, both the above promises are one and the same. The promise made by the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام obviously was derived by the promise of Allah. This favour of Allah upon the people of Israel was the reward of their patience, as the verse has specified saying 'Because they stood patient.' That is, they were favoured by Allah for their being patient in their distress. This has an understated indication that any people or individual following the same example, at any time and in any place, shall get the same reward. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام when making the promise of gaining the rule over the land had emphatically said that perseverance, patience and seeking help from Allah was the only key to success.

Sheikh Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said that the verse suggested that in case one is not as powerful as to defend himself against an enemy, the best way to success is to remain patient. He said when a person who has been wronged, tries to take revenge on his own by doing wrong to his opponent Allah leaves him alone and lets him manage his own affairs, ending in success or facing a failure. On the contrary, when one seeks help from Allah against the affliction from others and remains patient, Allah opens the door of success upon him. As the above promise for the rule over the land was fulfilled by Allah, the same kind of promise

Allah made with the people of the prophet Muḥammad in a verse of Sūrah Al-Nūr:

وَعَدَاللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

"Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that he will make them inherit the land, as He had inherited those who were before them." (24:55)

As the Israelites witnessed the fulfillment of Allah's promise by having their rule over the land, similarly the Muslim Ummah witnessed the fulfillment of Allah's promise in the form of their sovereignty over the major part of the earth (Rūḥ al-Bayān). It is not justified to say that the Israelites did not observe patience, because when Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام asked them to be patient they said that they were persecuted before and after he came to them. Firstly, because their patience against the constant persecution at the hands of Pharaoh and his people is a proven fact. Secondly, the above statement might not be a complaint but a simple expression of their grief. Thereafter, the verse said, وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهٗ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ "And We destroyed whatever Pharaoh and his people used to build and what they used to raise high." This refers to the buildings they raised high and their trees etc. 'What they used to build' may also refer to their ill designs against the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. 'What they used to raise high' is a reference to their mansions and to their trees.

The events discussed up to this point were related to the destruction of Pharaoh and his people. The next verses describe the victory and success of the Israelites followed by their insolence in spite of all the blessings they received from Allah. These verses provide a kind of solace to the Holy Prophet ﷺ against his grief at the obstinacy of the unbelievers, by showing the annoyance of the early prophets at the hands of their people.

After the miraculous victory of the Israelites over Pharaoh and his people, and having a life of ease and comfort, they started to show the signs of ignorance as people of wealth show when given a life of luxury and opulence. The first impertinent request they made was to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to make for them a god like the gods of the

people they saw being worshipped on their way. They (the Israelites) said, يَا مُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَّنَآ اِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ "O Mūsā make a god for us like their gods." He said, قال انكم قوم تجهلون "You are really an ignorant people." The prophet Mūsā was greatly annoyed by their ignorance and said that the labour of worship of those people was to go waste. How could he think of making for them a god other than Allah while he had given to them excellence over the people of all the worlds. That is, the people who believed in the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام were superior to all the people of that age.

The next verses remind them of their pitiable condition and their persecutions at the hands of Pharaoh when their sons were killed and their daughters were saved to serve them as their maid-servants. Allah relieved them of this disgraceful chastisement through His prophet. Shall they be as ungrateful to their Lord as to take the abject stones as gods and make them partners with Allah? They must repent to Allah for their transgression.

Verse142

وَ وٰعَدْنَا مُوْسٰى ثَلٰثِيْنَ لَيْلَةً وَّاَتْمَمْنٰهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيْقَاتُ رَبِّهٖٓ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ۚ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَخِيْهِ هٰرُوْنَ اخْلُفْنِيْ فِيْ قَوْمِيْ وَاَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

And We made a promise with Mūsā for thirty nights, then We supplemented them with ten. So, the total period fixed by his Lord was forty nights. And Mūsā said to his brother Hārūn, "Take my place among my people and keep things right, and do not follow the way of mischief makers." [142]

This verse speaks of the period followed by the destruction of the Pharaoh and his people. Having a peaceful time after their deliverance from the Pharaoh and his people the Israelites requested the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to have some religious system of law so that they may act upon it. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah for a code of guidance for them. The Arabic word: واعدنا "*wā'adana*' is a derivative of وعد'*wa'dah*' which signifies a worded expression of offering something good to someone - a promise.

Allah made a promise to Mūsā عليه السلام to send His word to him. It was stipulated that Mūsā عليه السلام should go to the mount of Sināi and pass thirty nights there sitting in devotion for Allah. These thirty nights were later supplemented with ten more nights to make them forty.

There are some points in this verse which demand our attention: Firstly, the number of nights to be passed by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was fixed to be forty nights in the will of Allah. Why was he first asked to pass thirty nights, and then add ten more nights? No one, in fact, can have access to all the wisdom and insight contained in divine acts. The scholars, however, have provided with some explanations: The famous commentary 'Rūḥ al-Bayān' states that one of the wisdom behind the above commandment is of enjoining the laws gradually or by degrees to make it easier for people to practice. The commentary 'Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī' has said that this was for educating those in authority to give respite to their subordinates if they fail to complete their assignments in the prescribed time. This is what happened with Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام . When the spiritual excellence that was required could not be achieved by him in thirty nights, ten more nights were added to give him more time to acquire required perfection.

The commentators have reported that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام kept fasting constantly for thirty days and nights without breaking his fast in between. After completing thirty days he took the break fast and presented himself at the fixed point on the mount Sināi, Allah said to him that the peculiar odor generated by fasting in one's mouth is liked by Allah. Mūsā عليه السلام had lost the odor by brushing his teeth, he was therefore, required to observe fasting for ten more days in order to create the odor again.

The above reports of the loss of odor, however, cannot be taken to mean that brushing the teeth after fasting is prohibited or is something disliked, firstly, because the above report has been cited without the chain of narrators and secondly because it could be a commandment meant specifically for the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and not for other people, or peculiar to the followrs of the Torah. The permissibility of brushing one's teeth during fasting is a practice proved by the Holy Tradition. Al-Baihaqī has reported the following Tradition on the

authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: خَيْرُ خِصَالِ الصَّائِمِ السِّوَاكُ The best act of the one who is fasting is brushing one's teeth (with *miswāk*). Al-Jami' al-Ṣaghīr has said that the status of this *Hadīth* is that of Ḥasan (a kind of authentic Tradition).

One may wonder here how the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام could be fasting continuously for thirty days without making a breakfast even at nights, while during his travel for visiting Sayyidnā Khiẓr (Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام) he could not wait for even half of the day and said اٰتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِيْنَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هٰذَا نَصَبًا "Give us our food, because this journey has made us tired." Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān has explained that this difference was due to the different nature of journeys. This journey was of a created being for another created being while the journey on the mount of Sinai was for the Creator of a devoted created being who had separated himself from the Creation in quest of his Lord. This spiritual journey weakened the vigour of physical demands of hunger and thirst, making him capable of observing fast for continuous thirty days and nights.

Lunar or Solar Calendars

Another point inferred from this verse is that the laws of the Prophets counted the change of their dates at night. The above verse also has made a mention of thirty nights instead of thirty days. It is because the lunar calendar was the standard calendar in the laws of the Prophets. The beginning of the lunar month is based on sighting of the moon which is possible only at night. It is why the dates in lunar calendar are changed at sunset. Al-Qurṭubī has reported this statement on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabī حِسَابُ الشَّمْسِ لِلْمَنَافِعِ وَ حِسَابُ الْقَمَرِ لِلْمَنَاسِكِ "The solar Calendar is for the benefits in worldly matters while the lunar Calendar is for religious observances."

According to the commentary of the Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه the thirty nights were the nights of Zul Qa'dah, the eleventh month of the lunar Calendar. The ten nights added to them were the first ten nights of Zul-Ḥijjah. This makes us understand that the Torāh was given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام on the day of Eid-al-Aḍḥā. (Qurṭubī)

The significance of number forty

This verse also implies that the number forty has some special

effect in spiritual rectification of one's heart. It is reported in a Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that any one who worships Allah for forty days with sincerity of his heart, his heart is made a source of wisdom. (Rūh al-Bayān)

Practising Gradualism

This verse also educates people to fix a period of time for the fulfillment of their objective and to approach their aims gradually, as it is the practice of Allah to do things gradually. Haste and hurry in doing things is not approved by Allah. By creating the universe in six days while Allah had all the powers to create it instantly without requiring a single moment, He has provided people with a wise principle that they should approach their ends by stages in a period of time so that they may give due attention to their objectives. The Torah was also not given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in a moment but a period was fixed for it to emphasize the same practice. (Qurṭubī)

It was by ignoring this principle that the Israelites had lost their faith in Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام while leaving for the mount of Sinai had said that he would be away for thirty days. When he did not return in this period due to being retained for the next ten days, the Israelites, being unduly hasty people said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was lost somewhere, so they should choose another leader for their guidance. Consequently, they fell prey to the sorcerer Sāmirī and started worshipping the golden calf. Had they been a people of patience and practised gradualism, they would have not committed the fatal error of infidelity. The next sentence of the verse said, وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَٰرُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ "Mūsā عليه السلام said to his brother Hārūn, "Take my place among my people and keep things right, and do not follow the way of mischief makers." This sentence also contains some observations of religious importance.

Making one's deputy when needed.

The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام made it a point to appoint Sayyidnā Hārūn as his deputy when he intended to leave for the mount of Sinai and said that he should take the responsibility of his people in his absence. This makes it imperative for those who hold some responsible office that they appoint someone to look after the work in their absence.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to appoint someone as his deputy whenever he used to leave Madīnah. The Companions 'Alī and 'Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm were appointed as his deputies on different occasions. (Qurṭubī)

The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام gave certain instructions to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام before his departure to the mount of Sinai, indicating that leaving instructions or guidelines for the deputy is also a religious requirement. The first instruction given by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was just a word اَصْلِحْ " that is, 'set right'. The object of this imperative has not been mentioned. Possibly, he made it a general command to be observed by the Israelites and the Prophet Hārūn as well.

The second instruction was in these words: وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ "And do not follow the way of mischief-makers." It is obvious that Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام, being a Prophet of Allah could not be supposed to indulge in mischief. This instruction, therefore, meant that he should not do any such thing as could help or encourage the mischief makers. This is exactly what the Prophet Hārūn did when he saw his people following the magician Sāmirī, so much so that they started worshipping the golden calf. The Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام prevented them from this act as well as admonished Sāmirī against his mischief. Later, the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام , called him to account for this act of theirs, thinking that it was the result of inefficiency on the part of the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام. This also serves as a lesson for those who do not care for orderly disposition of matters and take it as a sign of piousness.

Verses 143 - 145

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوْسٰى لِمِيْقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهٗ رَبُّهٗ ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْۤ اَنْظُرْ اِلَيْكَ
ؕ قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰىنِيْ وَلٰكِنِ انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَاِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهٗ
فَسَوْفَ تَرٰىنِيْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهٗ دَكًّا وَّ خَرَّ مُوْسٰى
صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿١٤٣﴾ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰۤى اِنِّى اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسٰلٰتِيْ
وَبِكَلَامِيْ ۖ فَخُذْ مَاۤ اٰتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا

لَهٗ فِى الْاَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَّتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَیْءٍ ۚ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا ۚ سَاُورِيْكُمْ دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And when Mūsā came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show (Yourself) to me that I may look at You." He said: "You shall never see Me. But look at the mount. If it stays at its place you will see Me." So when his Lord appeared to the Mount, He made it smashed, and Mūsā fell down unconscious. Then, when he recovered, he said: "Pure are You. I repent to You, and I am the first to believe." [143] **He said, "O, Mūsā, I have chosen you above all men for my messages and for My speaking. So, take what I have given to you, and be among the grateful."** [144]

And We wrote for him on the Tablets every thing of advice, and explanation of all things. So hold it firm and ask your people to hold on to the best things in it. I shall show you the house of the sinners. [145]

The verse 143 carries the phrase لن ترانی "you shall never see me" The phrase has an indication that sighting of Allah is not impossible, but that he (Mūsā علیہ السلام) cannot endure it with his present physical disposition. Had it been impossible, the phrase would have been لن اری : "I cannot be seen" (Mazharī) This allows that sighting of Allah is a logical possibility even in this world but at the same time this verse has precluded the possibility of its occurrence in this world. This is also the unanimous view of the majority of scholars. The following *hadīth* has been included in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim:

لن یری احد منکم ربه حتی یموت

"None among you can see his Lord unless he dies."

The second phrase, وَلٰكِنِ انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ "But look at the mount" is a physical demonstration of the fact that in his present state the addressee is not capable of enduring the impact of such experience.

Thereafter, Allah actually demonstrated this fact by a flash of His appearance on the Mount of Sināi which could not stand it and was smashed into pieces.

The next phrase is فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ "So when his Lord appeared to the Mount." The Arabic word تَجَلّٰی "*Tajallī*" signifies exposure or disclosure. According to the Spiritual masters (Ṣufīs) the word signifies seeing something indirectly through some other means, like seeing certain thing reflected in the mirror. The word, therefore, cannot signify 'seeing'. It is also inferred by this very verse because this verse has negated the possibility of seeing while it has mentioned the occurrence of 'Tajalli' or appearance on the mount of Sinai.

Imām Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ḥākim have reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse and placing his thumb on the tip of his little finger said that only this much of Allah's light was exposed to the mount of Sinaī which made it burst into pieces. This does not necessarily mean that the whole of the mount was not shattered, but the part of the mountain directly exposed to light might have been affected.

The Speech of Allah:

The fact that Allah spoke directly to the Prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام is confirmed by the Qur'ān in clear terms. The first time Allah spoke with the Prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام was when he was entrusted with Prophethood. This is the second time at the occasion of giving him the Torah that He spoke to him. The wording of the present verse indicates that this later discourse of Allah had some additional charactersties as compared to the first speech of Allah.

As to the question what was the nature and character of this discourse, cannot be ascertained by anyone but Allah. Only those logical suppositions, in this regard, can be allowed which do not go against any rule of the Sharī'ah. None of such views can be accepted as being definite unelss supported by some valid argument. The best practice, in this regard, is the one followed by the Companions, their disciples, and the elders who followed them. They left such matters to Allah and never tried to make ungrounded supposition to resolve them. (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

The last sentence is سَاُورِيْكُمْ دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ "I will show you the abode of the sinners". This is a kind of promise by Allah that the Israelites shall soon take over Egypt or perhaps Syria, referred to as the abode of the

sinners in this verse. There are two views about the reference to the abode of the sinners. The first holds that the reference has been made to Egypt while the second takes it to refer to Syria. The difference of opinion is, in fact, based on a question whether the Israelites had returned to Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh and his people or not. If they went back to Egypt at that time and ruled the land, as has been indicated by the verse 137 saying that Allah made the Israelites inherit the land, then, this verse definitely has referred to Syria, as the abode of the sinners. It is because, in this case, the Israelites had taken over the land of Egypt before this event of Allah's light appearing to the Mount of Sinai. In case, they did not go to Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh, the reference may be to Egypt and Syria, both.

The phrase وَكَتَبْنَا لَهٗ فِي الْاَلْوَاحِ "And we wrote for him everything on the Tablets" makes us understand that the Torah was given to the Prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام inscribed or written on the Tablets. [1]

Verses 146 - 151

سَاَصْرِفُ عَنْ اٰيٰتِيَ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَكَبَّرُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ
وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا سَبِيْلَ الرُّشْدِ
لَا يَتَّخِذُوْهُ سَبِيْلًا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا سَبِيْلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوْهُ سَبِيْلًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآءِ الْاٰخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ ؕ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا
مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوْسٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ
حُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ ؕ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّهٗ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا
يَهْدِيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا ۘ اِتَّخَذُوْهُ وَكَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَلَمَّا سُقِطَ فِيْۤ
اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَرَاَوْا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ۙ قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا

1. Another view with regard to these tablets is that these tablets were given to him prior to the revelation of the Torah and were not the part of the Torah. This has been cited by Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani under his comments on this verse. He has cited it from Ibn Kathir. (Translator)

وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوْسٰى اِلٰى
قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۙ قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُوْنِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِيْ ۚ
اَعَجِلْتُمْ اَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَاَلْقَى الْاَلْوَاحَ وَاَخَذَ بِرَاْسِ اَخِيْهِ يَجُرُّهٗٓ
اِلَيْهِ ؕ قَالَ ابْنَ اُمَّ اِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضْعَفُوْنِيْ وَكَادُوْا يَقْتُلُوْنَنِيْ ۫ۖ
فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْاَعْدَآءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِيْ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿١٥٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِاَخِيْ وَاَدْخِلْنَا فِيْ رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَاَنْتَ
اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾

I shall keep away from My verses those who show arrogance on the earth unduly without truth. And even if they see every sign they do not believe in it. And if they see the Path of guidance, they do not take it as their way, and if they see the path of misguidance they do take it as their way. That is because they have belied Our signs, and have been neglectful of them. [146] **And those who have belied Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, their deeds have gone waste. They will not be rewarded but for what they have been doing.** [147] **And after him the people of Mūsā made a calf from their ornaments; just a body with a moaing sound. Did they not see that it neither talked to them nor did it guide them to the path? They took to it, and were so unjust.** [148] **And when they became remorseful and saw that they had gone astray, they said, 'If Allah shows no mercy upon us, and forgives us not, we shall certainly be among the losers.'** [149] **And when Mūsā returned to his people, angry and sad, he said, "How bad is the thing you have done in my absence? How did you act in haste against the command of your Lord?" And he dropped down the Tablets and grabbed the head of his brother pulling him towards himself. He (Hārūn) said, 'O, born of my mother, the people have taken me as weak and were about to kill me, so do not let the enemies laugh at me, and do not count me with the wrong-doers.'** [150] **He said, 'My Lord forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy. And You are the most Merciful of all those who show mercy."** [151]

Commentary

The verse 146 spoke of the arrogant people as showing arrogance injustly. The word without truth or injustly indicates that assuming arrogance in response to the arrogant people is a justified act, since it is the act of arrogance in appearance, and not in reality. It is a known dictum: اَلتَّكَبُّرُ مَعَ الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ تَوَاضُعٌ "Showing arrogance to the arrogant is an act of humbleness". (Masāil as-Sulūk).

The effects of Arrogance

By saying, "I shall keep away from My verses those who show arrogance," the verse implies that the people who have an offensive sense of superiority over others are deprived of knowledge and understanding. They are rendered incapable of benefitting themselves from the signs of Allah. The term 'Signs of Allah', may have a reference to the revealed verses of the Torah, Evangel and the Qur'ān, as well as to the signs inherent in all the things of the heavens and the earth. The false sense of superiority is, therefore, the worst habit which keeps man away from deliberations in the signs of Allah and getting awareness of the truth.

We find it stated in Rūḥ-al-Bayān that arrogance is such a wicked habitude as raises a wall between man and the knowledge from Allah. Since divine knowledge comes only through the mercy of Allah, and the mercy of Allah visits those who are humble. The spiritual leader Sheikh Rūmī has said:

هر کجا پستی آب آنجا رود　　　هر کجا مشکل جواب آنجارود

"Water flows down towards the slope, and solution goes where difficulty appears."

The next verses continue to narrate the remaining part of the story. When the prophet Mūsā علیہ السلام did not turn up after thirty days from the mount of Sinai where he was to be ordained by Allah after passing ten more nights on the mount, the Israelites who were a hasty and impatient people began to make fuss about it.

Among them there was a person named Sāmirī who was a prominent man, but at the same time, had beliefs in superstitions. He said to the people that the jewels and ornaments of the Egyptians possessed by them were not permissible for them. It may be noted that

the plunder or booty taken from the enemy after their defeat was also not permissible for the Israelites. The Israelites gathered all their jewels and handed these over to him. He melted the ornaments and forged a golden calf from it. A peculiar thing reported about him is that he had collected some dust from under the hoofs of the horse of the Archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel) at some occasion. Allah had made this dust to have the effect of some kind of life. Sāmirī mixed this dust with the molten metal while preparing the calf. This made the calf to emit a sound like the mooing of a cow.

Having designed this satanic invention he invited the people to worship the calf and said that it was god. He said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had gone to speak with God to the mount of Sināī while god had come to them in the form of this calf. Sāmirī already enjoyed a place of respect among them, this unusual demonstration increased their trust in him and they started worshipping the calf, and took it as their god. The verse 148 has given a short description of this event while another verse of the Holy Qur'ān has described it in detail.

The verse 149 speaks of their remorse on this guilt and their repentance, while the verse 150 describes the events followed by the arrival of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام from the mount of Sināī. It described that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely angry when he saw his people in this state of ignorance. It is reported that Allah had informed him of their perversion on the mount of Sināī. Now seeing them in this state with his own eyes filled him with indignation. First, he turned to his people and said: بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي مِنْ بَعْدِي "How bad is the thing you have done in my absence". أَعَجِلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ "How did you act in haste against the command of your Lord?" That is, you must have waited until the book of Allah came to you. Some of the commentators have said that it meant that they hastily decided that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was dead. Then he turned to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام whom he has left among them as his deputy. He wanted to free his hand in order to grab him. He quickly put down the tablets of the Torah and grabbed the head of his brother. This has been termed as having dropped. The Arabic word used here is: القاء *Ilqā'* which signifies dropping or throwing. This gives rise to a doubt that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام showed disrespect to the tablets of the Torah by throwing or

dropping them down. It is obvious that throwing the tablets of the Torah was great sin, and equally obvious is the fact that all the Prophets are innocent and free of all sins. The implication of the verse, therefore, is that he put away the Tablets as quickly in order to free his hands, as seemed like having been dropped. The Holy Qur'an has described it by using this word as a gesture of warning. (Bayan al-Qur'an)

Thereafter he turned to the Prophet Harun عليه السلام and grasped the hair of his head. The Prophet Harun then gave him the true account of the events and said that it was not his fault, for he stopped them from this wicked act but they did not listen to him. They were so obstinate about it that they were about to kill him. He said that he should not count him among the ignorant people and should not let his enemies laugh at him by treating him in that way. This made the Prophet Musa عليه السلام cool down. At this occasion, he prayed to Allah, saying, رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ "My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us to Your mercy, and You are the most merciful of all those who show mercy." He asked forgiveness for his brother for any of his shortcoming with regard to his duties. He asked forgiveness for himself either for his putting away the tablets of the Torah in a hurry which the Holy Qur'an had described as having been 'dropped' to make a gesture of warning, or perhaps, for educating people that they should include themselves while asking forgiveness for others to preclude the sense of complacency on their part.

Verses 152 - 156

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا
السَّيِّاٰتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَاٰمَنُوٓا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا
لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُّوسَى الْغَضَبُ أَخَذَ
الْأَلْوَاحَ ۖ وَفِي نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ
﴿١٥٤﴾ وَاخْتَارَ مُوسٰى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيقَاتِنَا ۚ فَلَمَّا
أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ ۖ

أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَّا ۚ إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ۖ تُضِلُّ بِهَا
مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَهْدِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ۖ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً
وَّفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ۚ قَالَ عَذَابِيْٓ أُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ أَشَآءُ ۚ
وَرَحْمَتِيْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ
الزَّكٰوةَ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۚ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Surely, those who have taken the calf (as god) upon them shall befall the wrath of Allah, and humiliation in the worldly life. And that is, how we recompense the fabricators. [152] **And those who have done evil deeds, then have repented thereafter, and have believed - surely after that your Lord is most Forgiving, very Merciful.** [153] **And when the fury of Mūsā quieted down, he picked up the Tablets, and in its contents there was guidance, and mercy for those who are fearful before their Lord.** [154] **And Mūsā selected seventy men from his people for Our appointment. Later when the earthquake seized them, he said, "My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among them have done? It is nothing but a trial from You, wherewith you let go astray whom You will, and give guidance to whom You will. You are our protector, so forgive us, and have mercy on us and You are the best among those who forgive.** [155] **And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to You in repentance." He said, "As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses.** [156]

The first verse (152) has warned those who took to the worship of the calf and persisted in it, of their sad fate in the Hereafter, and of disgraceful life in this world.

The worldly life is also affected by the sinful deeds

A part of punishment of some sins is also given in this life. This is

what happened to Sāmirī. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام commanded him to live apart from the people not touching any one with his hand nor is he touched by any one of the people. Consequently for the rest of his life he lived a deserted life of seclusion, walking about with animals. No human did come near him.

Al-Qurṭubī has reported on the authority of the Companion Qatādah that his punishment from Allah was that whenever he touched someone or was touched by anyone of the people both suffered from fever. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has observed that the symptoms of this disease are still inherited by his generations. This verse has ended with this sentence. وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُفْتَرِيْنَ "And this is how we recompence the fabricators." The Sheikh Sufyan ibn 'Uyainah has said that those who invent new things in the Shari'ah (take to Bid'ah) also commit the sin of fabrication and deserve such punishment. (Maẓharī)

Imām Mālik has also inferred from this verse that those who invent new practices in the Sharī'ah deserve the same punishment of Allah's wrath in the Hereafter and disgrace in this life. (Qurṭubī)

The verse 153 speaks of the people who repented to Allah for their sin after the admonitions of their Prophet, and fulfilled the formidable condition of killing each other for their forgiveness. They killed each other as was stipulated in the command of Allah for their forgiveness by Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام called them to him and informed them that Allah had accepted their repentance. The people killed in this combat were awarded martyrdom while those who survived were forgiven by Allah. This implies that those who get themselves involved in sinful acts, if repent to Allah and correct their belief, Allah forgives them in His mercy with no regard to the gravity of the act. It is, therefore wise to turn to Allah in repentance instantly after every sinful act.'

The verse 154 describes that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام lifted up the tablets of the Torah which contained guidance and blessing for those who feared Allah. The Arabic word: نُسْخَة *'Nuskha'* rendered as contents signifies a writing copied from a book or other writings. There are certain reports that inform us that the tablets had broken at the time the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had put them away quickly. This time Allah gave him the Torah written on some other material.

Seventy people and their Death

The verse 155 describes an unusual event. After the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام brought the Torah for his people and bade them to follow it, they, being a crooked and pretentious people, said that they were not sure of it's being the word of Allah, and that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام might have written it himself. He prayed to Allah for making them certain about it. Allah said to Mūsā عليه السلام that he should choose seventy men out of his people and bring them to the mount of Sinai, He shall make them hear the word of Allah which was done as was promised. But they said that they were not certain of the voice heard by them as being the voice of God - 'We shall believe only when we see Allah vividly.' Since this demand was based on ignorance and obstinacy, they evoked the wrath of Allah. They were caught by the earthquake from beneath and by a thunder clap from above. Instantly they fell down on the ground as senseless as dead.

The word used in Sūrah Al-Baqarah while describing this event is (صَاعِقَة) which signifies thunder, while in this verse the word (رجفة) has been used which denotes earthquake. The two words can be reconciled by assuming that they were punished by both the thunder and the earthquake. In short, they looked like dead, or perhaps they were really dead. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely aggrieved by this incident. Firstly, because they were all prominent personalities of the Israelites, secondly, he did not know how he would face his people on his return. They woud blame him with the murder of all these people, and would even kill him. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام said to Allah, 'O, my Lord, I know that it is not your will to kill them, as they could be killed at earlier occasions more suited to their destruction. They could be drowned with Pharaoh, or killed at the time of calf-worship, but you did not do so. I am sure that You do not want them dead, but You aim at giving them warning in this way. Besides, You cannot kill all of us for the bad deeds done by some foolish people.' He also said, "O my Lord, I know this is just a trial from You. You let some people go astray with Your test and give guidance to some others who percieve the wisdom and lesson inherent in them. I am also among those who know that You are The Wise and All-Knowing. You are the Most Merciful of all and the Most-forgiving. O my Lord, forgive the insolence shown by these people." As a result of his prayer, all the

seventy men were raised to life.

The verse 156 contains the last portion of the prayer. It said: وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِیْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِی الْاٰخِرَةِ اِنَّا هُدْنَآ اِلَيْكَ "And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to you in repentance." Allah Almighty answered in response to this request:

عَذَابِیْٓ اُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ اَشَآءُ وَرَحْمَتِیْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ .

"As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My Mercy extends to everything. So I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh and those who do believe in Our verses".

That is, though all the disobedient deserve the punishment of Allah but out of His mercy, which encircles everything, even the wrath of Allah, He afflicts with His punishment only a few whom He wills. His mercy is as great as includes everything, even those who rebel Allah and deny Him are shown some of His mercy, though it is limited to this world alone. When His mercy is so covering that it includes even the disobedient, He will surely write it for those who deserve it by fearing Allah, paying Zakāh and by believing in His verses. Then the Prophet Mūsā علیه السلام was given the good news of it's acceptance.

The Commentators have varied opinion about the above interpret ation of this prayer. This verse has no indication of the acceptance of his prayer in clear words as in other cases the approval of his prayers has been clearly mentioned. For example, the approval of his prayer has been mentioned in these words at another occasion (20:36): قَدْ اُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى "O Mūsā you are given what you asked for." It is mentioned in another verse (10:89) اُجِيْبَتْ دَّعْوَتُكُمَا (O! Mūsā and Hārūn) your prayer has been accepted." At this occasion (7:156), no mention of such approval has been made. Some commentators have, therefore, suggested that this prayer of the Prophet Mūsā علیه السلام was not accepted in favour of the Israelites, rather, it was accepted in favour of the Muslim Ummah. The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has, however, said it to be a remote possibility.

The correct interpretation, therefore, is that the Prayer of the Prophet Mūsā was comprised of two requests. The first, was of mercy and forgiveness for those who were punished, and second for writing the good for him and his people both in this world and in the Hereafter. The acceptance of the first request is mentioned in this verse while the answer to the second request has been mentioned in the next verse (157). In response to his first request he was told that Allah does not punish every one who acts sinfully. He punishes only a few whom He will for their transgession. Therefore these people also shall not be punished. His Mercy is as great as covers every creation of Allah. Even those who are punished are not completely deprived of His mercy, since they could get harder punishment than they got. Allah has all the powers to do everything He wills.

The Satan claimed that according to this verse he was also the subject of His mercy because His mercy is said to be extending to everything and he was one of 'everything.'

My teacher, the Sheikh Anwar Kāshmīrī has said that this verse has indicated that His mercy *can* encircle every thing. It did not say that His mercy *shall* encircle everything. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān it has been said in more clear words:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُوْ رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ وَّلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ

"If they disbelieve in you say: 'Your Lord has all-encompassing mercy; but His punishment cannot be warded off from the evil-doers-6:147."

This has made it clear that vastness of His mercy does not preclude the sinners from being punished by Him.

In short, the first part of the invocation of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in favour of these people for mercy and forgiveness was instantly granted, but the second part asking for writing the perfect favour of Allah both in this world and in the Hereafter was stipulated with certain conditions. That is, as far as this world is concerned Allah can make His mercy common to all without regard to their belief or disbelief, but the Hereafter is a distinct world where His Mercy shall be limited only to those who fulfil certain conditions. Firstly, those who

fear Allah and take to piety that is, they fulfil all their religious obligations and avoid things forbidden by Allah, and pay Zakāh regularly out of their earnings, and thirdly, those who, firmly believe in His verses without offering any pretences or false interpretations to them. If these people too, fulfil the above conditions, the perfect favour shall be written for them both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The next verse, however, has indicated that people who shall perfectly fit the above description will be those coming after them in the last age, and follow the last Prophet, consequently deserving the perfect Mercy or favour of Allah. According to the report of Qatādah cited above, the Satan claimed that he also deserved the Mercy of Allah, for His Mercy extends to everything but the condition of 'Īmān (belief) etc. specified in the verse excluded him. Similarly, the Jews and the Christians claimed that they too believed in Allah and paid Zakah, therefore, they shall also get the perfect Mercy of Allah in both the worlds. The next verse, however, included the condition of belief in the last Prophet ﷺ and in the verses of the Qur'ān. This has excluded the Jews and the Christians who did not believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Verse 157

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا
عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهٰىهُمْ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ
اِصْرَهُمْ وَالْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ
وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injīl (The gospels), and who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair, and makes pure things permissible for them and makes inpure things prohib-

ited to them, and relieves them of their burden, and of the shackles that were upon them. So, those who believe in him and strengthen him, and help him and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful." [157]

The Distinct virtues of the Muslim Ummah

This verse speaks of the people who, in actual sense, deserve the perfect Mercy and complete favour of Allah asked by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام for his people. It said that the people fulfilling the conditions, referred to in the previous verse, in real sense are those who follow the unlettered Messenger of Allah. The verse, while speaking of these people, described certain distinctive qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Then the verse enjoined not only belief in him but also following the commands and practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . This makes us understand that in conjunction with belief in Allah, practicing the Sunnah (the practices) and the Sharī'ah (The Law) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is imperative for eternal success in the Hereafter.

The phrase الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الأُمِّيَّ "The Messenger, the unlettered prophet", has mentioned three qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The Arabic word: أُمِّيّ '*Ummī*' rendered as unlettered signifies a person who does not know the art of reading and writing. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to the Arabs as: أُمِّيِّيْن '*Ummiyyīn*' because the Arabs generally had very little to do with reading and writing. Being incapable of reading and writing is, obviously not a quality, rather it is an indication of imperfection. No matter how unusual it may seem, the same sign of imperfection has come to serve the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a sign of his perfection of the highest degree, taking in view the unparalled erudition and exemplary wisdom and learning preached and demonstrated by him.

A demonstration of perfect wisdom, showing wise practices and behaviour by a man of letters is considered to be a fruit of his education, but when these and many other attributes of perfections of the highest humanly imaginable degree come out of a personality, who did not even know how to read and write, makes it as bright a miracle as daylight. It is more surprising when we see him living in Makkah (Mecca) for forty years without ever having any opportunity to learn. Exactly when he is forty years of age, suddenly he starts speaking things of such great wisdom and, in such a linguistic style and diction

that none in the world could produce a match of even the smallest part of this word - the Qur'ān. [1] This is, indeed, a self-evident witness affirming that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the true Messenger of Allah and Qur'ān, the true word of Allah. The quality of being unlettered, therefore, may be a defect for others but for the Holy Prophet ﷺ it is a commendable attribute.[2]

The fourth quality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in this verse is that they shall find him written in the Torah and the Injīl (Evangel). It may be noted that the verse did not say that they will find his attributes or indications written in the Books. It said that they will find him written in their revelations. It is an implicit indication that the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in the Torah or the Injīl shall be so expressive and with as clear details as seeing them will be similar to seeing the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. The mention of the Torah and the Injīl, without a reference to the Zabūr (The Book revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd [David]) is because the Christians and the Jews believed in them, otherwise Zabūr also contained the description of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ in the early Books

The Present versions of the Torah and the Injīl, having undergone great changes and distortions have lost their essential quality of being original and trustworthy. Despite this fact, they still contain expressions bearing reference to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Besides, it is obvious that the Holy Qur'ān had declared, in definite terms, that the Torah and Injīl contained the descriptions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The Jews and the Christians living in the period of the Holy Prophet would have used this Qur'anic claim against the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims, in case this claim could be proved as not corresponding to reality. We find that neither did the Jews nor the Christians ever try to refute this

1. The author here, refers to a verse of the Holy Qur'ān (2:23) throwing a challenge to the whole world to produce a sūrah (chapter) comparable to any of the Qur'ānic Sūrahs. Inability in meeting this challenge by the Arabs who were as boastful of their oratory as to call the whole mankind excepting themselves, the Ajam signifying a dumb person is certainly a clear evidence of the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'ān. (Translator)]

2. The verse under discussion has mentioned this attribute along with as great attributes as Messenger and Prophet. This Qur'anic witness is enough to show that his being unlettered was equally a great attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . (Translator)]

claim, which is a witness of the truth that the Torah and the Injīl current in that period contained transparent references to the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Otherwise, the Jews and the Christians would have used it as against this Qur'anic claim.

It may be noted that some of the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in these books have been reported in the Holy Qur'ān with reference to the Torah and the Injīl, while some other attributes have been reported in the Holy Traditions (*Ḥadīth*) by those new Muslims who read them in these book themselves, and later they had converted to Islām after reading such descriptions.

Al-Baihaqī has reported the following event in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah. The Companion Anas رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that a boy from the Jews was in the service of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Once he was sick, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went to his house where he saw the father of the lad reciting some parts of the Torah beside his bed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to the father, "I bid you to tell me by the pledge of Allah if you find descriptions in the Torah indicating my coming as a prophet and referring to my attributes?" He negated it. The son instantly said "O Prophet of Allah, my father is wrong. We find you and your attributes mentioned in the Torah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah." The Holy Prophet ﷺ bade his Companions that they should perform his funeral ceremonies, after his death, according to Islām because he was a Muslim, after this witness. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ owed some money to a Jew. He demanded the Prophet to pay him the money back and said to him in a harsh tone that he will not let him go until he gets his money back. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him that the Jew had a right on him, and sat down by him saying that he will not go until he lets him go willingly. The Holy Prophet ﷺ remained there for the whole day and night. He offered the Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib and 'Ishā', and Fajr of the next day (from mid day to the next morning). The Companions were greatly annoyed at this behaviour from the Jew. They were secretly admonishing the Jew so that he may let the Prophet go. The Holy Prophet ﷺ having some idea asked them of what they were doing. They said that it was unbearable for them to see the

Prophet in the custody of a Jew. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to them, "My Lord has prohibited me from doing wrong to any one under the covenant."

Next morning, the Jew who was highly impressed by this remarkable experience, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and declared:

اَشْهَدُاَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاَشْهَدُ اَنَّكَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ

> "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah."

Subsequent to this declaration of his faith in Allah he said that by detaining the Prophet ﷺ he meant nothing but to test the truth of his attributes mentioned in the Torah. He said that he had read the following description concerning him in the Torah. He also declared to give away half of his wealth in the way of Allah. The description given by him is this:

"Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh. He shall be born in Makkah. The place of his migration shall be Madīnah. His country will be Syria. He shall neither be a man of harsh temperament, nor shall he speak roughly. He shall not make noise in bazars. He shall be away from the acts of immodesty."

He said that he found out the truth of this description in him. He was a wealthy person, and half of his wealth was a considerable amount for the Muslims. (The above incident has been reported by Maẓharī with reference to Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah by Baihaqī)

Imām al-Baghawī has reported on the authority of Ka'ab Aḥbār that the Torah contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

> "Muḥammad is the Messenger and chosen servant of Allah. He is neither a man of harsh temperament nor is he a man of disagreeable speech. He does not cry in bazars, nor does he return ill when ill is done to him. He forgives or ignores the wrong-doers."

> "His birth place is Makkah and his migration shall be to Ṭaybah (Madīnah). His country is Syria and his people shall be *ḥammādīn*. That is they shall praise Allah when in comfort and when in trouble. They shall say Takbīr when ascending in

their travel. They shall watch the shadows in order to ascertain proper time of their prayers."

"He shall wear a sheet of cloth round his waist and keep his hands and feet clean with ablution (Wuḍū). His man calling for prayer shall raise his voice in the air. In battle fields they shall line up as closely as in prayers. At nights their recitations shall be heard like humming of the bees."

Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Sa'd have cited full chain of narrators saying that Sahl Maulā Khuthaimah has informed that he had read the following description concerning the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Injīl (Evangel):

"He shall neither be short nor shall he be tall. Colour shall be fair, hair, in two locks. He shall bear a seal of prophethood on his body between shoulders. He shall not accept alms, shall ride on camel and by himself shall he milk the goat, and wear the patched clothes."

"He shall be in the line of Isma'īl. His name shall be Aḥmad:

Ibn Sa'd in his book 'Tabaqāt', Dārimī in his Musnad and Baihaqī in his book Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, who was a great scholar of the Jews. He said that Torah had contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

"O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness over all the nations of the world, as the bearer of good tidings to the righteous, as a warner to the wrong doers and as Protector of the Ummiyyīn' the unlettered Arabs. You are My Messenger and servant. I have named you, 'Mutawakkil' (One who trusts Allah). You are neither a man of harsh temperament, nor quarrelling, nor crying in the markets. You do not return evil in response to evil, rather forgive or ignore the wrong-doers. Allah shall not let him die until he sets the crooked right and make them believe in Allah exclusively, until he makes the blind eyes see, dumb ears hear and sealed hearts open."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī also contains a similar description on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ رضی اللہ عنہ . Besdes, al-Baihaqī has reported the following statement in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah, on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih, the great scholar and expert in the

early books.

"Allah revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd (David) in the Zabūr as follows: 'O, Dāwūd, there shall come a Prophet after you. His name shall be Aḥmad. I shall never be displeased with him, nor he shall ever be disobedient to me. I have forgiven all of his errors and omissions. I have enjoined upon his people, the optional as well as the obligatory prayers that I had enjoined upon the early Prophets. On the day of judgement they shall come before me having the light similar to the light of the early prophets. O Dāwūd, I have blessed Muḥammad and his people with excellence over the people of other prophets. I have favoured them with six special concessions which I did not concede to the early people. They shall not be punished for their inadvertent omissions. I shall forgive their unintentional sins if they seek My forgiveness. The money they shall spend willingly in My way, I shall give them manifold in return in this world also."

Those who shall say إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ "We belong to Allah, and to Him we are to return," when ever they are faced with some distress, I shall turn their distress into blessing and mercy and a means of his guidance to paradise. I shall accede to their invocations, sometimes, by giving them what they asked for, and sometimes, by storing their prayers to be granted on the Day of Judgement." (Rūḥ-al-Ma'ānī)

The above are only a few out of hundreds of such Traditions which have been collected by the religious scholars in separate volumes, among them is Sheikh Raḥmat Allah Kairānvī of India who has dealt with this subject thoroughly in his book 'Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq'. He has given specific examples of such descriptions found in the current versions of the Bible, despite the fact that they have been robbed of their originality through innumerable changes and distortions by the Judo-Christian theologians. The Urdu version of this remarkable work has been published in Pakistan. [1]

Some additional attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have also been

1. By the grace of Allah, I have the honour of rendering this work into English. Three volumes of the English version have been published in London. (Translator)

included in the descriptions found in the Torah and the Injīl, among them is his attribute of bidding good to people and preventing them from evil. اَمَرُبِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ نَہِی عَنِ الْمُنْکَرِ ,. The Arabic term Ma'rūf literally signifies something recognized, acknowledged or known, while the term: مُنْکَرُ 'munkar' signifies strange, or unrecognized. That is, Ma'rūf refers to the acts which are known and recognized in Islām while Munkar refers to the acts which are not recognized or known. This has indicated that the act which was recognized by, or known to, the people of the first century of Islām shall only be considered as good-deed otherwise it shall be termed as '*munkar*' or rejected. This, in turn, makes us understand that any act, not approved by the Companions and their disciples (صحابہ و تابعین) cannot be considered as good-deed with no regard to how positive or agreeable it looks. The authentic Traditions have, therefore, termed the acts not acknowledged or approved by the Companions and their disciples as innovated acts (مُحْدَثَاتُ الْاُمُوْرِ) or '*bid'ah*' (innovation). In the next phrase of the verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been described as having the attribute of inviting people to good and preventing them from evil. The verse (7:157) said: يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهٰهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ "Who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair."

This attribute has been, a common attribute of all the Prophets, as it had to be, because the very purpose of their being ordained by Allah is to guide people to good and prevent them from evil. There must be some reason in describing this attribute as a distinct feature of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . A little reflection on his effective way of preaching, and speaking to people according to their state of mind is enough to show the distinction. The Arab bedouins who knew nothing except grazing the camels and goats were spoken to in such a simple and candid terms that made them understand effortlessly even complex and speculative ideas. He used to receive delegates from the world-powers of the time like Rome and Persia and from other tribes. They were greatly impressed by his ingenuous approach in making his point easiy intelligible to them. His god-gifted capability of making impact on others by his speech was miraculously unusual and has been acknowledged even by his enemies. Another attribute described in the Torah was that through the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Allah shall make the blind eyes see and dumb ears hear, and the sealed hearts open. This may also have a reference to his effective method of preaching and

making things understood easily.

The verse under discussion has described second attribute that he shall permit his people to eat pure things and shall prohibited impure things. This implies that many things which, in fact were pure and good, and had been forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment shall be permitted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ for his people. For example, the fat of permissible animals were forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment against their sinful deeds.

For example, the fat of the properly slaughtered animal which was forbidden for them was made permissible by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for the Muslims. The example of impure things includes blood, dead animals, liquor and all the prohibited animals. This also includes impermissible means of income like gambling, interest and bribes etc. (Al-Sirāj al-Munīr). Some scholars have included immorality and ill manners also in impure things.

Next the verse speaks of the third attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ "And relieves them of their burden and of the shackles that were upon them.

The Arabic word *'Iṣr'* اصر signifies heavy burden enough to stop movement, and the word *'Aghlāl'* is a plural of *'ghull'* (غل) signifying handcuffs or shackle which binds the hands of a criminal with his neck. Both the words refer to punishment and were not, in themselves, a religious requirement. For example, the Israelites were essentially required to cut away the piece of cloth having impurity on it. They were not allowed simply to wash it away. Similarly the spoils of war acquired during *jihād* with infidels was not permissible for them. Reportedly, a heavenly fire used to come and burn it up. They were not allowed hunting on *Sabbath* (Saturday). The human organs involved in committing sin were required to be cut off. The murderer had to be essentially killed in retaliation with no regard to the nature of murder: deliberate or homicide by mistake. They had no legal concession of paying ransom.

The arduous injunctions described above have been regarded to in this verse by the words burden and shackles. It is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall abrogate such injunctions and replace them

with easily practicable commandments. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has referred to this aspect of Islamic Sharī'ah in a Ḥadīth saying 'that he is leaving among them an easy and practicable law which is neither cumbersome nor susceptible to going astray'. In another tradition he said: اَلدِّيْنُ يُسْرٌ "*Dīn* (Islam) is easy".

Subsequent to the description of some attributes of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم the verse has said:

فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

"So, those who believe in him, and hold him in reverence, and help him, and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful."

This verse has stipulated the achievement of success with four conditions namely, belief in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, having reverence for him, readily coming to his help and following the commandments of the Holy Qur'ān.

The word used for reverence in this verse is عزّروہ which is derived from 'Ta'zīr'. Lexically it means 'to stop someone, with love and affection, from doing something, and to guard him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has interpreted it as 'reverence. Almubarrad has commented that it denotes the highest degree of reverence. The implication of the verse is that the achievement of everlasting success is the destiny of those who, in addition to having love and respect for him, are always ready to help him against his enemies. In the life of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم helping him was directly related to his person; but after his departure helping his message or supporting the Islamic Sharī'ah is anologous to helping the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Qur'ān has been referred to with the word 'light'. Since light does not require an external proof for its existence, similarly the Qur'ān, in itself, is a clear proof of its being divine and the word of Allah, since the highest degree of wisdom and eloquence that it contains is as evident as the sunlight which requires no proof for it's existence. Specially so when it was spoken by an unlettered man. Similar to light which is not only bright in itself, but has the characteristics of making the darks bright as well, the Holy Qur'an has

enlightened the mankind which was lost in darkness.

The significance of the Sunnah:

The verse under discussion started with the words, "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet," and has ended on the phrase. "and follow the light sent down with him". The first phrase enjoins the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم while the second phrase bids to the obedience to the Qur'anic injunctions. This has indicated that eternal salvation is dependent on the obedience of both, the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and that the obedience of the Holy Prophet can be achieved only by following the way of his life - the *Sunnah*.

Love and respect of the Prophet is essential

The phrase عَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ "And hold him in reverence and help him." has been placed between the above two sentences, implying that the obedience required for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is not like the obedience one has to show to the high ranking official out of some necessity. This has to be the obedience in true sense of the word which is a product of love and respect. That is to say, one should bear as much love and reverence for him as to make this obedience dearest to him. People have varied relations with their Prophet. He is a Prophet, a master, a commander and an object of great love at the same time. Besides, the Prophet being superior to all his people in respect of knowledge, wisdom, and social and moral behaviour demands, deep respect or veneration on the part of his people.

Our Messenger صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has perfection in each of the above aspects making it essential for the Muslims to fulfil the demands of all his positions. He should be believed as a prophet, obeyed as a commander, venerated as a man of great knowledge and wisdom and deeply loved and cherished for being very kind to them.

The obedience of the Prophet has to be a religious requirement for the Muslims because the very purpose of his being sent down remains unfulfilled without it. In the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah Almighty has enjoined additional obligations upon the Muslims. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān we find the phrase: وَتُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوْهُ "So that you assist him and honour him." (48:9) Yet in another verse people have been warned that they should not raise their voices above the

voice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . The verse said:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَرْفَعُوْۤا اَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ

"O Believers! do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet." (49:2)

In another verse the Muslims have been advised in these words.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ

"O believers, do not go ahead in the presence of Allah and His Messenger. (49:1)

The verse has warned the Muslims that they should not start their speech before the speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his presence. The Companion Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رضی اللہ عنہ has taken it to imply that people should not start talking before the Prophet of Allah speaks, and should remain silent when he talks. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān has prohibited the Muslims from calling the Messenger of Allah in a manner they call each other. It said:

لَا تَجْعَلُوْا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَآءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

"Do not make the calling of the Messenger, among yourself, like the calling of one another." (24:63)

The Holy Qur'ān warned the Muslims that all their good deeds shall go waste if they show lack of respect to him.

The companions, who availed the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ most of their time, maintained the respect of the Holy Prophet according to Qur'ānic instructions. It has been reported that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ , after the revelation of the above verse, used to speak with the Messenger of Allah as stealthily as saying some secret to him. Same was the case with Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضی اللہ عنہ .

The companion 'Amr ibn 'Āṣ رضی اللہ عنہ has said:

"None on earth is as dear to me as was the Messenger of Allah but at the same time I was unable to cast my looks at him. If I am ever asked to describe him, I find it difficult since I have never seen him enough as to give out his description."

Tirmidhi has reported Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ saying that whenever the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came in the assembly of the

companions, people kept their eyes down with respect. Only Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهما raised their eyes and used to smile at them.

'Urwah ibn Mas'ūd was once sent to Madīnah for spying on the Muslims. On his return to Makkah he reported, "I have seen the courts of great kings like the king of Rome and Persia and I have met King Negus but the respect and veneration I saw in the hearts of the Muslims for their prophet was unique, never seen anywhere in the world. I think you shall never succeed against them."

The Companion Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah رضى الله عنه has reported in a Tradition that the companions of the Prophet of Allah deemed it against his respect to call him from outside his house. They knocked at his door with their finger nails to avoid making a loud sound. Even after his departure the companions did not only avoid talking loudly in his mosque, they also avoided raising their voice while giving sermons in the mosque. A number of people could not help themselves from weeping when some one made a mention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This exemplary love and respect of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let them share a considerable part of prophetic perfection and enjoy the highest religious status next to the prophets.

Verses 158 - 159

قُلْ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنِّى رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا ٱلَّذِى لَهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ لَآ إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْىِۦ وَيُمِيتُ ۖ فَـَٔامِنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ٱلنَّبِىِّ ٱلْأُمِّىِّ ٱلَّذِى يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ وَكَلِمَـٰتِهِۦ وَٱتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَمِن قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰٓ أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِٱلْحَقِّ وَبِهِۦ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

Say, "O people, I am a messenger of Allah (sent) to you from the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and brings death. So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Ummi (unlettered) prophet, who believes in Allah and in His words and follow him so that you may get the right path." [158] **And among the**

community of Mūsā there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [159]

This verse speaks of one of the basic aspects of the prophethood which is among the fundamental tenets of Islam. That is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent as His Messenger to the entire mankind and to the jinn (genies) coming into being upto the day of judgment.

This verse has commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to make general declaration that he has been sent to all the people of the world, and that his prophethood was not limited to a particular people and place as was the case with the early prophets who came to a particular people and place and for a limited period of time.

He is the last of all Prophets

The fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent down at the end of all prophets is an obvious reason behind the Islamic belief of Finality of prophethood. His being the last of all prophets and coming down for the guidance of all people of all future times leaves no room for any other Prophet. The same fact provides with an explanation to a characteristic quality of the Muslim Ummah. According to a Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , there shall always be a group among the Muslims who will keep defying the anti-Islamic forces and putting resistance in the way of sacrilegious thought and practice. It will also correct false interpretations of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. This group shall be favoured by Allah with His special help and thereby will , ultimately, win over the opposite forces. It is because these people are considered to be the real inheritors of the prophetic mission, faithfully discharging their duty after the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Imām al-Rāzī, under the comments of the Qur'ānic commandment كُونُوا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (Be in the company of the truthful) has remarked that this phrase has provided an assurance that a group of the truthful shall always be available for people, otherwise the command of seeking their company made no sense. Imām Rāzī has inferred the principle of consensus (اجماع) from this phrase. That is, the presence of the truthful people was enough to preclude the agreement of the Muslim *Ummah* on error.

Ibn Kathīr has inferred from this verse that it has provided a proof

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the seal of the prophets because his message was for all the people of the world and for all the ages to come. According to some authentic Traditions, the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام will also follow the Law of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his descent from heavens in the last age. Apart from this verse there are many other verses which speak in unmistakable terms of the Finality of Prophethood. For example the Holy Qur'ān said:

وَأُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِأُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ (الانعام - ١٩)

"And this Qur'ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you thereby, and whomsoever it may reach." (6:19)

This, evidently, enjoins the following of the Holy Qur'ān upon all the people coming after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to acquire knowledge of the Qur'ān.

Some distinctions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Ibn Kathīr has cited the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad reporting by authentic narrators that at the occasion of the battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was engaged in the late night prayer (Tahajjud). The companions gathered around him in a circle to save him from any possible attack by the enemy. After completing the prayer the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "This night I have been awarded with five distinctions, not awarded to any prophet before. Firstly, my prophethood has been extended to all mankind while the message of the prophets prior to me was limited to their particular people only. Secondly, my presence creates a feeling of dread in the hearts of my enemy which overtakes him from a distance of one month's travel. Thirdly, the spoils taken from the enemy have been made permissible for my people, while it was prohibited for the early people. Fourthly, Allah has made the whole earth a place for our prayers like a mosque, and made it a purifier (in *tayammum)* for my people, while the prayers of the early people was limited to their churches or synagogues. They were not permitted to pray at home or out in the land. Besides, in the absence of water my people are allowed to make use of soil, in place of water for *tayammum* (a substitute of ablution). The early people were not given this concession." Then, he said, emphatically that the fifth

distinction was, above all, the most promising and helpful. He explained, "Every prophet was asked by Allah to make one particular supplication which was to be essentially acceded to, and every prophet made that invocation for their particular aim. Allah asked me too to make such invocation. I preferred to reserve my invocation until the Day of Judgement which will be of great use to you and to those who follow and bear witness that there is no god but Allah."

Another Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضی اللہ عنہ has contained that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Any one hearing the news of my appearance, be he a Muslim, Christian or Jew must believe in me, otherwise he will be placed in Hell."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī has reported the following incident with regard to this verse: Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہما once had severe disagreement on a matter. Sayyidnā 'Umar left the place to express his dissent. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ followed him in order to bring him round. Sayyidnā 'Umar being angry with him entered his house and locked the door upon him. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, having no choice went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and related the whole story to him. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ had a feeling of regret for misbehaving Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, he too went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and informed him of the incident. The Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was annoyed at it. Seeing that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was going to be admonished for it, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My fault was greater". At this point the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Can you people not leave one of my companions alone and save him from the annoyance on your part? Do you people not know when I declared by the will of Allah يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا "O people, I am a messenger of Allah sent to you all," you all belied me? It was Abū Bakr alone who testified to my Prophethood."

In short, this verse is a clear evidence proving that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent to the whole mankind. His message is for all generations and for all times to come and for all places. No one can

achieve salvation without believing in him, even if he is faithfully and devotedly practicing some other faith or book.

The next sentence of the verse reminds people that he has been sent from the One to Whom the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs and who gives life to every living creature and brings death to it. That is, He alone is the Lord of the Universe. The last sentence of the verse said:

فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْاُمِّيِّ الَّذِيْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَاتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ

"So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *Ummi* (unlettered) prophet who believes in Allah and in his words, and follow him so that you may get the right path."

After establishing the fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sent for all the people of the world and for all times to come, and that there is no other choice for any one but to follow his law - the Islam, the verse enjoins the belief in Allah and in His Messenger, who is Ummi, the unlettered. He, himself believes in Allah and in His words. The people should, therefore, follow him to keep themselves on the right path.

The 'words' كلمات refer to the word of Allah revealed to his prophets like the Torah, Evangile (the book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus)) and the Qur'ān. It may be noted that the command of believing in him is followed by another command of following him. This has indicated that sheer belief or making the verbal utterances of belief, is not enough for guidance or salvation. Practicing Islamic Shari'ah is essentially required for one's salvation in the Hereafter.

The great saint and spiritual leader Sheikh Junaid of Baghdad has remarked that all the paths leading to Allah are closed except the path specifically defined by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

The Truthful among the Israelites

The verse 159 said: وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰٓى اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ "Among the community of Mūsā there are people who guide to the truth, and do justice thereby." That is, there is a group among the Israelites who follows the

truth and decides their controversies according to the dictates of the Truth - Islam. Which are the people referred to in this verse as following the truth among the Israelites? This refers to the people who faithfully followed the commandments of the Torah and the Injīl at the time they were revealed, and those who readily accepted the faith of Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم according to the predictions contained in the Torah and the Injīl. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to this group in a number of verses in commendable terms. There is a verse which said: مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُوْنَ "Among the people of the Book there are those who are steadfast, they recite the verses of Allah in the night hours, and they prostrate." (2:113)

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

"Those to whom We gave the book before this, they do believe in this (Qur'ān)". (28:52)

Under the comments on this verse we find a narrative in the commentaries of Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr. A group of Israelites who greatly despised the corrupt practices of the Israelites had prayed Allah for having a separate land away from the other tribes so that they might practice according to the original faith preached by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Allah carried them to a land somewhere in the far East where they faithfully practised their faith.

Another favour of Allah bestowed upon them was that in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they were granted an opportunity to embrace Islam directly on the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In the night of Ascension (شبِ معراج) the Archangel Jibra'īl (Gabriel) took the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to these people on the way to heavens. They accepted the faith and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم taught them some Sūrahs (chapters) of the Holy Qur'ān.

The Prophet of Allah asked them if they had some means of weighing and measuring and what other means of subsistence did they have? They answered that their usual practice was that they cultivated the land and collected the whole produce together in a heap. The people came and took from it according to their need. They said, "We do not, therefore, need any weights and measures." The Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked them if any one of them ever told lies. They said that no one among them ever told lies because it was a usual practice that any person speaking a lie was burnt up by a heavenly fire. He asked them as to why all their houses were of the same type? They answered, that it was to avoid the possibility of showing off one's affluence as compared to others. He asked them why they had built up their graves in front of their houses? They said that this made them remember their death all the times.

After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from heavens to Makkah, this verse was revealed to him. Al-Qurṭubī, under the comments of this verse has narrated this event along with other suggestions and has remarked that this narrative was not authentic. Ibn Kathīr, however, has termed it as an unusual event but did not reject it.

In short, this verse makes us understand that there has always been a group among the Israelites who followed the Truth. Be they the people described above or the ones who embraced Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Verses 160 - 162

وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمُ اثْنَتَیْ عَشْرَةَ اَسْبَاطًا اُمَمًا ؕ وَاَوْحَیْنَاۤ اِلٰی مُوْسٰۤی اِذِ
اسْتَسْقٰهُ قَوْمُهٗۤ اَنِ اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۚ فَانْۢبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ
اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَیْنًا ؕ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ؕ وَظَلَّلْنَا
عَلَیْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَیْهِمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰی ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَیِّبٰتِ
مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ یَظْلِمُوْنَ
﴿١٦٠﴾ وَاِذْ قِیْلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُوْا هٰذِهِ الْقَرْیَةَ وَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا حَیْثُ
شِئْتُمْ وَقُوْلُوْا حِطَّةٌ وَّادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
خَطِیْٓـٰٔتِكُمْ ؕ سَنَزِیْدُ الْمُحْسِنِیْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِیْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ
قَوْلًا غَیْرَ الَّذِیْ قِیْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَیْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ
بِمَا كَانُوْا یَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

And We divided them into twelve tribes, as separate

communities. And we revealed to Mūsā when his people asked him for water, "Strike the rock with your staff." Then twelve springs gushed forth from it. Each tribe came to know their drinking place. And We shaded them with the shadow of the clouds. And we sent down to them the 'Mann' and the 'Salwā'[1] (saying), "Eat of the good things we have provided you." And they did us no harm, rather they have been harming their own selves. [160]

And when it was said to them, "Live in this town and eat therefrom any where you like, and say, 'Ḥiṭṭah' (we seek forgiveness) and enter the gate prostrating, so that We forgive your errors. We shall give much more to those good-in-deeds." [161]

But those of them who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was said to them. So, We sent down upon them a scourge from the heavens, because they have been transgressing. [162]

The above verses have enumerated various favours that Allah bestowed upon the Israelites, and spoke of their deviation from the commands of Allah resulting in a heavenly punishment for their transgression. The translation of the verses given above is self explanatory and the relevant details have already been given in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (First volume of this book, translation and commentary under verses 57-59, pages 217-221).

Verses 163 - 166

وَسْئَلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ ۘ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي
السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَّعًا وَّيَوْمَ لَا

1. Manna which is "Man-hu' in Hebrew has been described in Exodus (14:14) in these words, "a small round thing, as small as a hoar frost on the ground". According to 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, it usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun. The amount necessary for each man was about an omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to 2 1/2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account probably distorted by traditional exaggeration. The actual Manna found to this day in the region of Sinai is gummy saccharine found on a species of Tamarisk. As to 'Salwā' it is a quail, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War 1914-1918 by many Indian officers who campainged between Egypt and Palestine. (The Holy Qur'ān by Yūsuf Alī vol. 1 page 31) -- Translator.

يَسْبِتُونَ ۙ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَبْلُوهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾
وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا ۙ اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ
عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ قَالُوا مَعْذِرَةً إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾
فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بِعَذَابٍ بَئِيسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
عَتَوْا عَن مَّا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

And ask them about the town which was situated by the sea, when they used to transgress in the matter of Sabbath, when their fish came to them openly on the Sabbath, and did not come when they did not have Sabbath. In this way, We put them to a test, because they used to act sinfully. [163]

And when a group of them said, "Why do you preach to a people whom Allah is going to destroy or punish with a severe punishment? They said, "To absolve ourselves before your Lord, and in order that they may fear Allah." [164]

So when they forgot the advice they were given, We saved those who used to forbid evil and seized those who transgressed, with a bitter punishment, because they had been disobeying. [165]

So, when they persisted in doing what they were forbidden from, We said to them, "become apes, humiliated." [166]

The detailed discussion of the events contained in the above verses have been produced in the first volume of this work in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (under verses 58-60, pages 211-223). Those interested may refer to those verses for details.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to warn the Israelites present in his time by reminding them the events related in these verses. The events referred to in these verses are clear and require no explanation.

Verses 167 - 169

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ يَّسُوْمُهُمْ
سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ
﴿١٦٧﴾ وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا ۚ مِنْهُمُ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ وَمِنْهُمْ
دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۙ وَبَلَوْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَسَنٰتِ وَالسَّيِّاٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ
﴿١٦٨﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَّرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَأْخُذُوْنَ
عَرَضَ هٰذَا الْأَدْنٰى وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا ۚ وَإِنْ يَّأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ
مِّثْلُهٗ يَأْخُذُوْهُ ۗ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّيْثَاقُ الْكِتٰبِ أَنْ لَّا يَقُوْلُوْا
عَلَى اللّٰهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوْا مَا فِيْهِ ۗ وَالدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ
لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

And When your Lord declared that He would surely keep sending, till the Day of Doom, those who inflict on them evil punishment. Certainly, your Lord is swift in punishing, and certainly He is the Most-forgiving, Very Merciful. [167]

And we divided them on the earth as separate communities. Some of them are righteous, while some others are otherwise. And we tested them with good (happenings) and with bad happenings, so that they might return. [168]

Then after them, came a generation who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying, "We shall be forgiven." And if there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again). Were they not made to enter the covenant contained in the Book that they should not say, about Allah, anything but the truth? And they learnt what it contained. And the abode is better for those who fear Allah. Have you then, no sense? [169]

The first two verses (167 and 168) have referred to the two punishments given to the Israelites. Firstly, Allah will keep sending up to the Day of Doom, some individuals or groups of people who will punish

and bring disgrace to them. In fact, this is what has been happening to them up to this day. They had been dominated and disdainfully treated by others as has been recorded by history. We may not be in doubt about their present government in a part of Palestine, as it is a common knowledge that the state of Israel is, in fact, a part of the world powers, created by them for their political objectives against the Muslim *Ummah*. They are still ruled over and dominated by the colonial powers. It is, in fact, a military base of America. The day these powers stop providing them with their aid they shall not be able to maintain their existence for long.

The second punishment has been mentioned in verse 168. That is, Jewish populace has been cut into fragments scattered in all the parts of the world they could not integrate themselves into a solid nation. The phrase وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ اُمَمًا "*And we divided them on the earth as separate communities*". has refered to this fact. The Arabic word قَطَّعْنَا signifies breaking into pieces. While the word اُمَم is plural of *Ummah*, which means 'a group', 'a party'. The verse means that Allah has divided them into fragments making them scattered on the earth.

This indicates that being integrated in a whole, or having an entity as a nation is a blessing of Allah while getting disorganized into parts separated from each other is a punishment from Him. The Muslims have always enjoyed the blessing of having their own entity, and being recognized as an organized people in the world. Starting right from Madinah in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم up to this day they have their own independent rule in various parts of the earth. The presence of Islamic countries from the far East to the West is an obvious proof of this fact.

Their present state in Palestine should not cause any doubt as they have to come together in a place in the last age according to the prophecies made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He informed us in authentic Traditions that Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام shall come down to the earth from heavens before the end of the world, and all the Christians shall embrace Islam. He shall fight a war against the Jews and put them to death. The culprits of Allah are not summoned through police, or other agencies; they are driven to their place of death by the causes created by the will of Allah.

The Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus) عليه السلام is to descend from heavens in the land of Syria. He shall fight war with the Jews. The Prophet Īsā عليه السلام has been saved the trouble of seeking the Jews in different parts of the world by causing them to gather in Palestine. As to their present political power and sovereignty in the State of Israel, it is a delusion which beguiles only those who are not conversant with the world politics. The so called 'State of Israel' is, in fact, a common camp ground of the big powers like America, Russia, and England. It depends upon the aid of its masters for its existence. It has to serve the aims and objectives of its Masters. They are still living in real servitude, and are deprived of their free rule in true sense of the word.

The Holy Qur'ān has informed us of their disgrace and distress up to the end of time in these words:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ يَّسُوْمُهُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ

"And when your Lord declared that he would surely keep sending till the Day of Doom, those who inflict upon them an evil punishment."

History has recorded that they have been continually persecuted by one people or another right from the time of the Prophet Sulayman عليه السلام to the present age. Their imprisonment by Nebuchadnassar and persecution at the hands of subsequent kings, then their defeat and ignominious fate at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Caliph 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه [1] are obvious example of this fact.

The second phrase of this verse is this:

مِنْهُمُ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ

"Some of them are righteous, and some of them are otherwise".

The righteous people among them are those who followed the commandments of the Torah faithfully and did not try to distort them as others did. The people termed as 'otherwise' include infidels and those who obstinately disobeyed their prophets and even killed them. The terms 'righteous' and 'otherwise' may also refer to the people who

1. The recent persecution of the Jews at the hands of Hitler in the second world war is a fresh example of this Qur'ānic declaration. (Translator)

believed in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and followed the Qur'ānic guidance after it's revelation. Opposed to them are those believing in the Torah as the word of Allah, disobeyed it or distorted its commandment and thus sold out their eternal salvation for petty gains of this world. The last phrase of this verse has said:

وَبَلَوْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَسَنٰتِ وَالسَّيِّاٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

"And we tested them with good happenings and bad happenings so that they might return."

The "goood happenings" refer to their state of prosperity, comfort and ease while 'bad happenings' has reference either to their various persecutions and calamities faced by them throughout their history, or it may have referred to some period of famine coming upon them as punishment. Both the methods of testing their obedience were used in their case. Prosperity and wealth were given to them to see if they show their gratefulness to their Lord. When they were a failure in this test, they were made to undergo many punishments already discussed in the foregoing verses.

Their perversion of thought and practice had gone to such extent that in the time of prosperity they said:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّ نَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ

"Allah is poor and we are rich." (3:181)

while in times of their destitution they said: يدالله مغلولة "Allah's hand is shackled." (5:64) Another implication of the verse is that prosperity or poverty, happiness or suffering are sent as a test to mankind in order to judge the faith and love of the created for the Creator. Both, prosperity and suffering should be of no real concern to the men of understanding, as they are temporary and have to end.

It is, therefore, not wise to show arrogance for one's prosperity or being dejected for one's impoverishment. A persian poet said:

نه شادی داد سامانے نه غم آورد نقصانے
به پیش همت ماهرچه آمد بود مهمانے

"Neither happiness awarded us with real benefit nor did sorrow make us weep. Both came as guests to our resolute spirit."

The verse 169 has said:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَّرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَأْخُذُوْنَ عَرَضَ هٰذَا الْاَدْنٰى وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُلَنَا وَاِنْ يَّأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهٗ يَأْخُذُوْهُ

"Then, after them came a generation, who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying: 'We shall be forgiven.' And if there comes to them similar stuff, they would take to it (again).

The Arabic word خَلَفَ is a past tense of خِلَافَة signifying a deputy or a person trusted with one's work in one's absence.

The second word used here is خَلْفٌ with the merged sound of the second letter *Lām*, generally denoting a deputy who is marked with wickedness, as opposed to the good practices of his elders. The word وَرِثُوا is a derivative of وِرَاثَة that is, inheritance. The next word is عَرَض meaning something bought with money. Sometimes, it is used just for something possessed. The use of this word for money indicates that any thing owned in this world is temporary, because this word, as an antonym of 'Jauhar' (substance), is used for an object which requires something else to show its existence like colour which requires another thing to show itself. The word اَدْنٰى has been derived from دُنُوٌّ which denotes nearness or lack of distance. The word دُنْيَا is a faminine gender of this word. The word اَدْنٰى may also be taken to be a derivative of دَنَاءَة which signifies disgrace. In this case the word shall refer to something disgraced.

The verse implies that there were two groups of people among the early Jews, the righteous and the wrong-doers. The people coming in later generations who inherited the Torah, however, acted opposite to their elders and made the Book an object of trading or a means of their earning. They used to manipulate and distort the text of the Torah for some money offered to them for this purpose. Moreover, "they said: وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُلَنَا "We shall be forgiven". In spite of committing as great a sin as distorting the text of the Book of Allah, they claimed their forgiveness by Allah. They are warned of this error in the very next sentence. saying: وَاِنْ يَّأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهٗ يَأْخُذُوْهُ "If there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again)." That is to say, they are in such a state of perversion that in case they are offered money for changing another

text, they shall readily accept it. The verse has implied that forgiveness of Allah is always there to those who are mindful of their error and turn to their Lord in repentence showing their remorse over what they have done, and making firm promise of not repeating the same mistake again. Being persistent in their sinful acts and claiming their forgiveness is sheer self deception. The next part of the verse puts a question to them, whether they were not made to enter a covenant with Allah that they shall never say anything but truth about Allah. Yes, they read this pledge in their Book. This is nothing but their impudence and obstinacy that stops them from realizing the truth of the Hereafter which is exclusively the fate of those who fear Allah.

Verses 170 - 171

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُمَسِّكُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۭ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ
الْمُصْلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَاِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَاَنَّهٗ ظُلَّةٌ وَّظَنُّوْٓا
اَنَّهٗ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوْا مَآ اٰتَيْنٰكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاذْكُرُوْا مَا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٧١﴾

And those who hold fast the book and establish the Salāh (are righteous) - Surely, Allah does not waste the reward of the righteous. [170]

And when We raised the mountain over them as though it were a canopy, and they thought it was falling upon them. (We said,) "Hold firmly what We have given to you and remember what is therein, so that you may become God-fearing." [171]

The preceding verse (169) contained a mention of a covenant made with the religious leaders of the Israelites in particular, that they shall not make any changes in the Torah and shall not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth. It has already been mentioned that they violated this pledge and distorted the contents of the Torah for petty amounts of money. This verse is an extension of the same theme. It says that there are some among their religious leaders who are truthfully following the commands of the Torah and are firmly adhering to its guidance. They established the Ṣalāh as was required. The verse has provided with an assurance to such people that they shall not be

deprived of their reward. That is, those who have been true to their faith and fulfilled its demands are righteous people among them.

There are some points of discussion related to this verse. The term 'Book' most probably refers to the Torah. Another possibility is that it refers to all the heavenly books of Allah like Torah, Injīl and the Qur'ān. Another point to be noted is that merely keeping the book of Allah and showing respect to it without following its' commandments does not fulfil the very object of its revelation. It is why the verse has used the word يُمَسِّكُونَ "Hold fast", in place of يَأْخُذُونَ or يَقْرَءُونَ "those who take it or read it. Holding fast the Book requires to follow all it's injunctions and commands.

The next thing we note in this verse is that out of a large number of doctrines of the Torah the verse has made mention of "establishing 'Ṣalāh' only. This is because the Ṣalāh is the most significant and purposeful act among the precepts enjoined by Allah. This is, in fact, the most basic and quintessential way of expressing one's faith in, and obedience to, Allah. Offering the Ṣalāh regularly makes one capable of being regular in other worships more willingly and with more ease. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has termed the Ṣalāh as being the pillar of Islām. The whole edifice of Islam rests on it. Whoever has erected it properly has built the whole structure of his faith on a stronghold. Any one not regular in Ṣalāh, is of no worth to Allah, even if he is seen reciting His name all the times and has unusual visions and does extraordinary acts.

The next verse (171) described another incident of the Israelites when they were forced to promise their obedience to the law of the Torah. It has also been mentioned in the Sūrah al-Baqarah. The Arabic word 'نَتَقْنَا signifies drawing or lifting up. In the Sūrah al-Baqarah the word رَفَعْنَا has been used which denotes the act of raising up. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has therefore, taken the word نَتَقْنَا to signify raising high. The Arabic word 'Zullah' ظلة means a sunshade or a canopy.

The verse refers to the time when the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام came back from the mount of Sinaī with the book of Torah. They found therein many injunctions which they thought were difficult for them, to follow. They started showing their unwillingness for obeying those

commandments. Allah commanded the Archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام to raise the mount of Sinai upon their town. The area of this town is reported to have been three square miles. When the mount of Sinai was hanged over their heads they fell down prostrating themselves out of fear and promised their obedience to the Law of Moses (the Torah). The future events, however, witnessed their deviation from the Law every now and again.

No compulsion in Faith

The above incident gives rise to a question. Why the Israelites were forced to make a promise of their obedience while the Holy Qur'ān has declared لَآ إِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ "There is no compulsion in Faith?" (2:256) The answer is quite simple. None of the disbelievers has ever been forced to accept faith, nor any one is allowed to use force for this purpose. However, those who have already entered the covenant of faith out of their free will and, later, deviate from the commandments of Allah just for avoiding their commitments, shall essentially be forced to abide by the rules and regulations of the Law. In case of deviation from their duty they must be held liable to punishments prescribed by the Law. This is what exactly happened in this incident. They had already believed in Allah and in His Prophet and had entered the covenant of Faith. What they did was to deny from obeying the Law of the Torah and rightly were forced to fulfil their commitment.

Verses 172 - 174

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِيٓ ءَادَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هٰذَا غٰفِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوٓا إِنَّمَآ أَشْرَكَ ءَابَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْءَايٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, that is, from their backs, their progeny, and made them testify about themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Of course You are, we affirm" – lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this," [172] **or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated**

partners with Allah, and we were (only) a progeny after them. Then, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?" [173] **And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return.** [174]

The covenant of *Alust*: عہد الست

These two verses describe the event of the great heavenly covenant which the Creator, Allah, made with all His created being even before they took the form of their existence. This covenant is known as the covenant of Alust (اَلَسْتُ).

Allah is the creator of all the worlds, the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. His infinite wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge has designed and manufactured this universe with as much perfection as leaves no room for any doubt or question. He has created everything with a wise set of rules and regulations. Following these laws ensures people of eternal success and ever-lasting peace and comfort while deviation from these principles makes one liable to punishments prescribed by Allah.

We may also note that His all–encompassing knowledge and infinite wisdom was enough to decide the fate of all the created beings without assigning His angels to watch over and keep the record of the deeds of His servants, and without weighing their deeds in the Balance on the day of Judgement. It is because He is All-Aware of the deeds, even of the hidden thoughts and intentions of His servants without the remotest possibility of making wrong judgement.

His Grace and perfect Justice, however, chose that none should he punished without providing him with documentary evidences of his sinful acts, in a way, that sinner himself finds no choice but to readily acknowledge his sinful deeds.

He appointed some of His angels to record each and every act done by an individual. The Holy Qur'ān said:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ اِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيْبٌ عَتِيْدٌ

"He utters not a word but there is by him a vigilant watcher." [1] (50:18)

1. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ everything good or bad about a mortal is recorded by his guardian angels" (A study of al-Qur'ān al-Karīm vol. 4 p. 969, by La'l Muḥammad Chawla) {Translator}

In another verse the Holy Qur'ān said: كُلُّ صَغِيرٍ وَّكَبِيرٍ مُّسْتَطَرٌ "And everything small and great is written down." (54:53) Then, on the Day of Judgement the Balance shall be set to weigh the good and bad deeds of all people. Those whose good deeds weigh heavy shall be rewarded with salvation while those whose bad deeds weigh heavier shall be punished.

Moreover, when Allah, the Best of All Judges shall hold His court on the Day of Judgement, He shall call for witnesses on the deeds of every individual. Certain wrongful people shall falsify certain witnesses. Allah shall ask his physical organs to bear witness to his deeds. They shall be given power to speak and bear witness against them. The places where the deeds were done shall also come to witness against them until they shall find no way to belie the witnesses and finally will make confession of their evil deeds. The Holy Qur'ān referred to it in these words:

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنْبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِّأَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ

"So, they will confess their sins, but far removed (from Allah's Mercy) are the companions of the blazing fire." (67:11)

We also note that Allah, who is the most kind and loving did not leave His servants at the mercy of law and regulations only. He, out of His kindness, provided His servants with complete guidance through His prophets and the Books, in order to save them from eternal punishment.

Like the kind parents who make it essential for their children to go to school every morning also make sure that their children get all their requirements ready before time to facilitate their following the law of school-going with all possible ease. Allah, who is free from all similarities is more loving and kind to His servants than are the parents to their children. He did not only formulate the laws but made them a source of real guidance. Along with the commandments He also taught how people can carry out His commandments with ease and readiness.

Apart from sending His messengers and divine books to His servants He appointed a large number of His angels to help and guide people to the right path. Besides, He created clear signs of His Power and wisdom all around so that people may use their own observation

and understanding to distinguish right from wrong, and to remember their Creator. He repeatedly invited people to make use of their observation and understanding when seeing His signs scattered all around them. He said, in the Holy Qur'ān :

وَفِى الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ وَفِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ

"And on the earth are signs for those who have firm faith, and also in your own selves. Do you not see then?" (15:20) [1]

Another arrangement made by Allah to make people act righteously was to make them enter into covenants with Him through His prophets. The Holy Qur'ān has references to a number of such covenants made with various people in varied circumstances. The Prophets were made to promise that they shall essentially convey Allah's message to their people without any regard to difficulties and reproach from them. This pious group of prophets did convey Allah's message as faithfully as was possible and sarificed all that they had in this way.

Similarly the people of every prophet were made to promise to obey their prophet, and in some special cases, to spend all their energy in carrying out particular commands. Some people fulfilled their promise while some others did not.

Among such covenants the most significant one is the covenant which all the prophets were made to enter regarding the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all the prophets shall follow the last of all prophets and assist him when they find some opportunity to do so. The Holy Qur'ān has mentioned this covenant in the following verse:

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتَابٍ وَّ حِكْمَةٍ، ثم جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ۔

"And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger

1. This verse has referred to two kinds of signs; external and internal. The external signs are profusely available all around us; the heavens the earth, the oceans, mountains, plants and trees, fruits of different colour and taste; they provide us with unmistakable guidance to our Lord. The internal signs include the process of our reproduction, our physique, our thoughts, intentions emotions and sentiments of happiness and sorrow. A little reflection on these signs positively leads us to the Creator and makes us to express our gratefulness to Him. (Translator)

verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." (3:81) [1]

The Significance of Bay'ah (بَيْعَت: Swearing Allegiance)

The traditional way of taking pledge (*bay'ah*: discipleship) from the devoted followers, is infact, in pursuance of this practice of Allah. The Prophets, their companions and spiritual leaders have been taking the pledge of allegiance from their followers. The incident of 'Bay'ah al-Rizwān' has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. It said:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْيُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

"Allah was certainly well pleased with the believers when they swore fidelity to you (O Prophet) under the tree." (48:18)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took such pledge of allegiance from his companions on many occasions. '*Bay'ah al-'Aqabah*' is a famous pre-migration covenant made with the Anṣārs of Madinah. The customary way of Ṣufis to take pledge from their followers, is a covenant taken for practising the commandments of Allah regularly and strengthening their belief in Allah by frequent remembrance of their Lord. The way of swearing fealty to some one has many advantages and draws '*Barakah*' from Allah.

After swearing fealty to some Sheikh (Spiritual Master), a follower feels himself more willing and inclined to practise the religious obligations, and is more conscious in seeking the pleasure of Allah.

The above description of Bay'ah also clears away a misconception common among the men of little knowledge that by putting one's hand in the hands of some Sheikh or spiritual leader is enough for one's salvation in the Hereafter. This is absolutely an erroneous notion as swearing allegiance is a pledge taken for following practical guidance according to the instructions given by the Sheikh. Therefore, only placing one's hands into the hands of a Sheikh is simply of no use. Rather, it is a deviation from the pledge and may incur the wrath of Allah.

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1. By implication this pledge taken by all the prophets makes it binding on the followers of all the prophets to believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to follow him and support him in achieving his objectives. It makes binding upon them to follow the law given by the last of all prophets. (Translator)

The verse (172) speaking of the covenant of Eternity عہدالَسْت in the preceding pages has used the word ذُرِّيَّة for the children of Adam. According to Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī the word ذُرِّيَّة has been derived from the Arabic root ذرء which signifies to create. The Holy Qur'ān has used this word to signify the same meanings in a number of verses. The word *'Dhurriyyah'* (ذُرِّيَّة) therefore signifies all those created. This implies that the covenant of Eternity included all the human beings as they are the progeny of Ādam عليه السلام .

We find some more information about this covenant in the literature of *Hadīth*. Imām Mālik, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Imām Aḥmad have reported on the authority of Muslim bin Yasār that some people asked the Caliph 'Sayyidnā ‘Umar al-Fārūq رضی اللہ عنہ of the connotation of this verse. He said that the same question was put to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the answer of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as he heard it was as follows:

"Allah Almighty first created Ādam عليه السلام, then He placed His hand upon his back, and drew forth all the righteous descendants of Adam who were to come into being and said, "I have created them for the Paradise, and they shall act righteously as to deserve Paradise. Then He placed His hand on the back of Adam and all the wicked descendants that were to come into being appeared. He said, "I have created them for the Hell, and they shall act wickedly as to lead them to Hell."

Someone from among the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "When Allah has already decided the fate of the mankind why the people are asked to do good deeds, while they are of no effect. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, "Whoever is crated for Paradise, he starts doing good deeds making him worthy of paradise and he dies in this state, while the one created for the Hell involves himself in wicked acts making him liable of the fires of Hell until he dies doing such deeds as leads him to the Hell."

That is to say, when one is not aware of the category he belongs to, he must invest all his effort and energy in doing such deeds as are the characteristic of the people of Paradise and should be hopeful of his being one among them.

The Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ has added that the people who appeared the first time were of fair colour while those appearing the second time were black.

The same description reported by Tirmidhi on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ has additionally reported that all the children of Adam who were to come in the world upto the end of time had a kind of brilliance on their foreheads.

Here we are faced with two descriptions apparently differing from one another. The descriptions given by the above traditions have described the children of Ādam coming out of the back of the Prophet Ādam علیہ السلام while the Qur'ānic verse under discussion has related them as coming forth from the backs of the progeny of Ādam علیہ السلام. In fact, there is no conflict between the two descriptions as the direct descendants of Adam are described as coming forth from the back of Ādam علیہ السلام while the people coming after them have been described as coming forth from the backs of his descendants.

The aim of this pledge taken from the whole mankind was to make them acknowledge that Allah Almighty is the Nourisher, The Sustainer or the Lord of all the created beings. This implies that the children of Ādam علیہ السلام coming forth from the back of the Prophet Ādam علیہ السلام were not in the form of spirit alone but also had a certain kind of physique made of some fine elements. It is because the function of nourishing is directly related to body which is made to progress from one state to another. The spirits do not require this kind of nourishment as they remain in one state from the moment of their creation. This is also supported from the above traditions speaking of the fair and black colour or the brilliance on their forehead because both, the colour and brilliance, require some material form to show their existence. The spirits obviously have no colour.

One may wonder how all the human beings to be created up to the Last Day could have gathered in one place. This also has been explained by the Tradition narrated by the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ which said that they did not appear with their usual size rather they appeared in the size of a small ant. In this age of scientific knowledge it should be of no surprise how a man of human size can be

reduced to the size of an ant. The science has established the fact that a perfect system similar to our solar system is functioning in and around the nucleus of an atom. The books of hundreds of pages can be reduced to a dot of small size through a process of micro filming. It should not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that Allah, the All-Powerful, might have reduced them to the size of an ant at this occasion.

The above discussion with regard to the covenant of eternity gives rise to a couple of questions:

1. Which was the time and place of the covenant?

2. This pledge was taken prior to the creation of all human beings, excluding Ādam عليه السلام . How did the children of Ādam have knowledge and reason to acknowledge Allah almighty as being the Nourisher or their Lord which requires the experience of their being nourished which was not possible prior to coming as human being on the earth.

The first question has been answered by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as reported through authentic sources by Imām Aḥmad and Nasā'ī that the covenant was taken at the time when Ādam عليه السلام was sent down from heavens to the earth. The place was the valley of Nauman known as the plain of 'Arafāt (Near Makkah).

As to the second question with regard to inability of their acknowledging Allah as their Lord prior to their creation, the answer is quite simple. Allah Almighty who has all the powers to do anything He wills, and who was able to make all the human beings appear in a size of an ant could more easily imbue knowledge and reason enough to make them capable of recognizing their Lord, the Nourisher. Allah made them appear with body and soul in a small size with all the physical functions needed by a perfect human being. Reason and understanding being the most significant functions must have been included.

Another question which remains unsettled is as to what value can be attached to a covenant occurring prior to the actual creation of human beings, and which is not remembered by them after they take their actual existence on the earth? Before proceeding to answer this

question we may add that, in some cases, there have been individuals who remembered the occasion of this covenant. For example, the great spiritual leader Dhul Nūn al-Miṣrī has said, "I remember the occurrence of this covenant as clearly as I am hearing it this very moment." Some of the elders have reported to have remembered even the people who were present near them. True, that such cases are rare and do not make an answer to the above question.

The answer to this question, therefore, is that there are many things or acts which are effective in their very nature without any regard to their being remembered or understood by others. They imprint the effect on others quite naturally.

For example, the common practice, among Muslims, of saying *Adhān* in the right ears of a new born and reciting *iqāmah* in his left ear [1] is an obvious example of such acts. The baby neither understands the meaning of this call nor does he remember it after becoming an adult. The wisdom behind this religious practice is nothing but to revive the pledge he has taken with Allah, and sow the seed of Faith in his heart by repeating the message of the cavenant in his ears. The influence of this act is so obvious that can be seen in every Muslim individual even if he is not practically a good Muslim. He takes pride in calling himself a Muslim and utterly dislikes being deprived of this categorical entity.

Similarly the commandment of reciting the Qur'ān even to those who do not know Arabic is perhaps for the same reason that their hearts are enlightened with the impact of the Qur'ānic words, and their Faith in Allah is renovated therewith.

The wisdom behind this covenant is similarly to sow the seed of Faith in the heart of every human being. This seed is taking it's nourishment in the soil of human heart , no matter weather people are conscious of it or not. The fruit of this seed manifests itself in the form of love and respect for god (Allah) which is a part of human nature. The expression of this love and respect, may take injust forms like

1. Adhān is a call for ṣalāh the ritual prayer which in fact is a bold declaration that Allah is one, has no partners, and is the greatest of all etc. while iqāmah is the same declaration with added enunciation that the salāh has been set ready to be joined by people. (Translator)

worshipping false gods - idols or created beings. The worships, just or unjust, is in itself, an expression of love and respect for the creator. The billions of people have this respect and love for Allah which is expressed by them through their worship according to their ideas of worship guided by their knowledge or ignorance. There is no need to speak of those few who, under the influence of mundane pursuits have deteriorated their natural understanding and forgot the pledge they made with Allah.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُوْدٍ يُوْلَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ Every baby is born on *Fiṭrah* (nature, that is, Islam) then he is converted by his parents to their religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Tradition that Allah Almighty has said, 'I have created my servants as Ḥanīf, that is, having faith in Allah, the one, then they were led astray by Satanic influences."

The next sentence of the verse has said:

اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هٰذَا غٰفِلِيْنَ

"Lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this."

That is to say, the pledge taken by Allah has lit the candle of Faith in their hearts. Now with little reflection they can easily recognize Him as their Lord. Therefore, their excuse of ignorance shall not be of any avail to them on the Day of Judgement.

Another possible excuse from them was to say:

اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَشْرَكَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ كُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ

"Or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated partners with Allah and we were (only) a progeny after them. So, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?"

The verse precludes them from seeking refuge in saying that they were unaware of the Truth. Being a progeny of their forefathers they only followed their path. Therefore they should not be punished for the error of their forefathers. The verse has said that they shall not be punished for the acts of their forefather. It was their own fault and

their apathetic attitude that led them to this disaster. It is because the covenant had sown the seed of Truth in their heart and it was not difficult for them to decide that the stones,. shaped by themselves into idols, or the fire, the trees and other created beings could, in no way, be considered as being their creator or possessing powers of helping them in their need.

The next verse 174 said:

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

"And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return."

That is, Allah has made His signs clear through His elaborate verses to facilitate people to turn back to their pledge and acknowledge Him as their Lord. Any one applying his reason can find the Truth and save himself from ever lasting punishment.

Verses 175 - 177

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاَتْبَعَهُ
الشَّيْطٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗٓ
اَخْلَدَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهٗ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ ۚ اِنْ تَحْمِلْ
عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ اَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ سَاۗءَ مَثَلَاِ
الْقَوْمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوْا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

And recite to them the story of the one whom We gave Our verses, then he wriggled out himself from them, so the Satan overtook him and he became one of the perverted. [175] **And if We so willed, We would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his desire. So, his example is like the example of a dog, if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants. That is the example of those who belied our signs. So, relate the chronicles, so that they may ponder."** [176] **Evil is the example of those who have belied our signs and have been doing wrong to themselves.** [177]

The above verses have described the story of a religious leader of the Israelites who had a great following for his piety and knowledge but suddenly went astray and became among the rejected. This event contains a number of lessons and points of exhortation, and has a link with the preceding verses. The foregoing verses spoke of the covenant made by Allah with the children of Adam in general, and with certain people in varied circumstances. The above verses also made a mention of those people who did not fulfil their pledge with Allah. For example, the Israelites who were waiting the arrival of a prophet and used to describe his attributes to others, but after the Holy Prophet ﷺ made his appearance, they rejected him just for wordly considerations.

The story of Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā

The present verses have related the story of a saintly person among the Israelites. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate this story to his people to show how a devoted scholar and great spiritual leader was deprived of all the knowledge, wisdom, popularity and fame only by following the mundane desires.

We do not find any personal identification or name of this person mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. There are, however, many Traditions reported by the exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān and the Companions and their disciples, giving a variety of information about him. The most authentic and trusted by the majority of scholars is the Tradition reported by Ibn Marduwaih on the authority of the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās which is as follows:

The name of this man was Bal'am bin Ba'ura. He belonged to Syria living in Cana'an near Jerusalem. According to a report he was an Israelite by birth. He had knowledge of certain books revealed by Allah. The Qur'ānic phrase الَّذِيٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا "The one whom We gave Our verses" refers to the same knowledge.

This event belongs to the period after the death of pharaoh and his people and the victory of the Israelites over Egypt. Allah commanded The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people to fight war against a people called Jabbārīn. The Jabbārīn who had seen the fate of Pharaoh and his people were greatly frightened when they saw the army of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام approaching them. They came to Bal'am and said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was a strong man and that he had

come with great army in order to expel them from their land. He should therefore pray Allah that He may turn them back without fighting war against them. Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā was known to be having the knowledge of "اِسْمِ أعْظَم" (the most gracious name of Allah). He used to pray with the help of this name and his prayers were generally granted.

Bal'am said to them that Mūsā, being the prophet of Allah, had the support of Allah's angels and he could not pray against him. He said that he knew the rank that Mūsā عليه السلام held with Allah, and that by praying against him he will ruin himself both in this world and in the world to come. Being insisted by the people Bal'am promised that he will first seek the consent of Allah for such a prayer, and in case Allah permitted him to pray against Mūsā he shall do so accordingly.

He performed some act to seek Allah's consent and in a dream was prohibited by Allah from making such prayer. He came to the people and informed them of this prohibition. The Jabbārīn presented him a gift of considerable value which he accepted. Subsequent to this gift their insistence increased. Some reports said that his wife advised him to accept the gift, and pray for them. Being blinded by the love of wealth and wife, he started praying against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. An unusual thing happened at this occasion. By the will of Allah the words he wanted to utter against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in his invocation, were uttered against the people of Jabbārīn themselves. They cried out and admonished him that he was invoking against themselves. Bal'am said that he was unable to utter a word against Mūsā عليه السلام and that he had no control over his utterances.

Consequently the Jabbārīn met the fate of disaster from the heavenly punishment, and the punishment of Bal'am was that his tongue protruded from under his mouth so much so that it dangled on his chest. Bal'am having ruined his life both in this world and in the world to come and being deprived of all spiritual powers he had, made a suggestion to the people of Jabbārīn saying, "There is only one way you can overcome the Israelites. Decorate your beautiful girls and send them to the Israelites giving them instructions that they should not put on any resistence against whatever is done by the Israelites. Being away from their homes they are likely to involve themselves in

adultery. Being the most detestable act to Allah, adultery has to incur the wrath of Allah. An adulterous people can never win over their enemy." This satanic suggestion was accepted by the people and they acted accordingly. A promient person of the Israelites fell prey to this trap. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام made all his effort to stop him from this act but he involved himself in this wicked act.

Consequently plague overtook them as a punishment, with a death toll of seventy thousand people in one day. The person who had committed the sin was murdered along with the girl and was hung by the Israelites at a public place. Then they turned to Allah in repentance and asked His forgiveness, which relieved them of this disgraceful punishment.

The Holy Qur'ān used the expression of 'wriggling out' for Bal'am's disregard to the knowledge and wisdom Allah had given to him through His verses. The Arabic expression فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا "He wriggled out from the verses of Allah" signifies coming out of an animal from it's skin like a snake which leaves it's old skin behind having no concern with it. This indicates that Bal'am had totally disregarded the knowledge and wisdom he was granted by Allah. The text phrase: فَاَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ "So, Satan overtook him" implies that as long as he possessed the knowledge of the verses of Allah, Satan was unable to possess him. As soon as Bal'am was deprived of this great gift of Allah, he overtook him and led him astray. Consequently he became one of the misguided people فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ "And he became one of the misled.

The next verse (176) has said:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗٓ اَخْلَدَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ

"And if We so willed, we would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth, and followed his desire."

The word اَخْلَدَ (*Akhlada*) is a derivative of اِخْلَاد which means to incline or to cling to something. The word اَرْض (*arḍ*) meaning the earth includes the globe itself and all the things present. Furniture, machines, clothes and food are in fact, the gift of this earth. By implication all the worldly possessions have been taken to include in a single word - the earth. The quintessence of this verse is that the knowledge of the verses of Allah are the real source of gaining prominence and advance-

ment. For those who show disregard to them and give preference to worldly desires and possessions, this very knowledge becomes a source of disgrace and disaster for them.

The verse under discussion has expressed this fact by way of a similitude. It said.

فَمَثَلُهٗ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ اِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ اَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ

"So his example is like the example of a dog; if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants."

The word لهث (*Lahath*) signifies to breath hard by ejecting one's tongue out.

The process of inhaling fresh air and exhaling unclean air is vital for every living being. Allah has made this process as automatic and easy as requires no effort on the part of living creatures - dog excepted. It is only dog that has to labour hard for the process of breathing, while other animals have to make such effort only when they are attacked or undergo some strenuous task. Bal'am b. Baura has been mentioned in this verse as being similar to dog. He had his tongue protruded and panted like a dog who pants when attacked and pants when let alone.

The next sentence of the verse said: ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا "That is the example of those who belied our signs." According to the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه "this has a reference to the Israelites of Makkah who were always longing for some one sent to them as their leader inviting them to Allah and teaching them the ways of following the right path. When this long-waited prophet came to them with as transparent signs of Truth as left no room for the resistence in his way, they too, 'wriggled out' from the commandments of Torah exactly as Bal'am Bā'ūrā had done.

The last sentence of this series said: فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ "So relate the chronicles (to them) so that they may ponder." The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate the story of Bal'am Ba'ura to them in order that they may take lesson from it and use their understanding.

The last verse in this series 176 said, "So evil is example of those

who belied our signs and they have been doing harm to themselves."

The General Message of the Verses

The above verses contain a number of useful points for the benefit of those who are heedful and make use of their understanding. Firstly, no one should be boastful of his knowledge and be proud for his piety. Things can change without notice just as happened with Bal'am Ba'ura. One has to be grateful to his Lord for all the knowledge and wisdom he has, and should keep praying Allah for being firm in his faith.

Secondly, one should avoid situations which seem to threat his faith and knowledge. Specially so, when money, wife and children are involved because the love of these things is the most powerful agent of misguidance.

Thirdly, one should avoid the company of the misguided people and be careful in accepting gift or invitation from them. Bal'am met the evil fate through accepting the gift of the Jabbārīn.

Fourthly, the acts of immodesty like adultery and fornication are the source of ruin and disaster for all the people living in a society. Those who want to save themselves from distress must prevent their people from committing such crimes, otherwise it will invite Allah's wrath and punishment upon them.

Fifthly, deviation from the commandments of Allah is, in itself a punishment and it opens the door to satanic influences, which work upon them quite unknowingly and lead them astray. Therefore, any one with knowledge must be conscious of this valuable treasure and seek Allah's help in protecting it from evil influences. He must carefully keep correcting himself against error.

Verses 178 - 179

مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ
﴿١٧٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ ذَرَاْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ۖ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ لَّا
يَسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ

الْغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

The one whom Allah gives guidance is the one on the right path; as for those whom Allah lets go astray, those are the losers. [178] **And surely We have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not, and have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled. They are the heedless.** [179]

The main theme of the verse 178 is that guidance and misguidance both are from Allah. He is the creator of good and evil, guidance and misguidance. The guided are those whom Allah has given guidance and losers are those whom Allah lets go astray. This theme has been mentioned repeatedly by the Qur'ān in many other verses to make the mankind know that Allah has created good and evil and has provided with clear instructions to distinguish one from the other, and with a kind of free will to choose one of the two paths. Those who willfully choose the right path and do good deeds get their reward from Allah while those who willfully take to the other path and do evil deeds are punished and sent to Hell.

Here we note that the above verse has mentioned the people of guidance in singular person while the people who are wrong and misguided have been mentioned in plural. This indicates that the path of guidance is the one true faith which was followed by all the prophets right from Ādam علیه السلام to the last of all Prophets ﷺ . The basic message of all the prophets has been one and the same. That is to say, the fundamentals preached by all the prophets were all same in every age. Therefore, people of any age and denomination who believed in their prophets and followed the teachings preached by them are considered by Allah belonging to one and the same category - that is, the guided. On the contrary, the ways of misguidance have been thousands in number, hence mentioned in plural in this verse.

Another point to be noted in this verse is that the people following the path of misguidance have been mentioned along with their punishment of Hell, while no mention has been made of any reward of the people following the right path. The verse mentioned them saying that

they are 'the guided'. This implies that guidance, in itself, is the greatest blessing of all, which encompasses all the rewards and bounties existing in this world or in the Hereafter. The reward of guidance requires no specific mention of other rewards which are embodied therein.

For example, some great king assures some individual that he is a close friend of the king and he shall be heard and trusted by him. Certainly he enjoys the highest position among the royal officials. He does not require the achievement of a formal rank or position. Similarly, when Allah has given the title of being 'the guided' to any one, he has got all the rewards of the world. The elders, have therefore said that the remembrance and worship of Allah are themselves the reward of the worship, because they are the great favour of Allah.

Any one engaged in the worship of Allah is receiving the greatest reward of Allah at the same time. Other blessings which wait for him in this world and in Paradise are second to it, as they are the fruit of this guidance.

This also explains the meaning of another Qur'ānic verse in which the believers are promised to receive from their Lord their reward. It said جَزَآءً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً "A recompense from your Lord, a gift." Here the reward of the believers has been expressed by two different words جَزَآءً a recompense and *'Atā* which is gift. The word جَزَآءً signifies something offered in return of some service while the word: عَطَآءً *'Atā* is a gift offered without any service or performance. This leads us to the fact that things which we take to be rewards of our performance or attainments are, in fact, the gift from our Lord. For the performance which has drawn this reward was in itself a gift form Allah Almighty who let us perform that particular service.

The next verse is an extension of the same theme. It said:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَاْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا

"And surely, we have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They possess heart wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not and they have ears wherewith they hear not."

That is, many Jinns and human beings have been created for Hell, because in spite of having all the means of guidance, the heart, the eyes and the ears, they do not use them to seek guidance. They could find the right path, had they used these faculties in proper way. They do not use their hearts to understand, their eyes to see things to be seen and their ears to hear things to be heard.

As a substance of the verse we are given to undestand that ultimate end or destiny is a divine secret, not known to any one, but there are definite signs which help us to make a surmise. The people of Hell can be identified by their charracteristic sign of not making proper use of their faculties of seeing, hearing and understanding. Allah has blessed us with these faculties for acquiring knowledge and recognition of our Lord. The people of Hell invest these abilities in worthles objectives and are evidently heedless of the real aim of man's life, that is, to earn with his capabilities eternal comfort and peace in the Hereafter through seeking guidance.

A Question and it's answer

A question may be asked about the above Qur'ānic verses. Here the Holy Qur'ān, has negated their qualities of hearing, seeing and understanding. On the other hand, we see that in real life they are not blind, deaf and insane. Like other human beings they do see, hear and understand things around them. How can this negation be reconciled with the actual fact?

The answer requires to refresh our usual knowledge with regard to things and living beings around us. Every thing created has an amount of sensibility equal to the need of it's purpose of existence. The things we call inanimate are not totally devoid of sensibility or life. The stones and the earth which are not assigned with the duty of growth or movement have so little an amount of sensitivity that can hardly be detected.[1]

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1. Human reason essentially requires the presence of some kind of perception or life in things called inanimate. It is because there must be some way of communication between the Creator and the created. The one who cannot communicate with created beings for the absence of sensibility on their part, is not worthy of being called god. Allah does communicate with all His created beings, animate or inanimate, which proves some kind of sensibility in all inanimate things. (Translator)

The vegetable Kingdom comes next in this series. The purpose of their existence requires growth and nourishment. The amount of perception or life given to them is greater in degree and is equal to their requirements. Next we come to animal kingdom where we find more elaborate and complex form of life. In addition to growth and nourishment, the animals have to move on the earth from one place to another. They have to seek their food to maintain their existence. They require to protect themselves form dangers and above all, they are required to reproduce their children. The amount of life given to them is greater and more obvious than the others so far discussed. They are, however, equipped with as much powers only as were needed to assist them in feeding and protecting themselves from dangers and enemies.

The last, but not the least, is human being who, in addition to, and more prominent of all the functions discussed above, has the duty of recognizing his Creator and the Lord of the universe, and seek His pleasure by following His commandments and avoid doing things disliked by Him. He is required to contemplate and give due thought to the creations and use his faculty of reason to distinguish right from wrong, abstain from evil and do good to please his Lord. Another distinction of a human being from other creatures is that he has been provided with vast apportunity to make progress in making his life more purposeful and more elevated in position. When he comes to make progress, he can attain more elevated rank than the angels. He is accountable for his acts and is promised of eternal peace and comfort for his good acts and everlasting punishment and distress for his evil deeds. He has been, therefore, trusted with the highest and the most perfect degree of life, in order that he is engaged in doing things that are proper for the aim of his life. He is not expected to waste his special faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing in the achievement of material things only like animals.

Keeping the above points in view, the human faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing should essentially be distinct from those of the animals. If he did not make special use of these faculties like distinguishing right from wrong, doing good and keeping away from evil, he would be rightly considered among those who have eyes but do not see, have ears but do not listen, have mind and heart but do not

understand. The Hoy Qur'ān has therefore termed them as صُمٌّۢ بُكۡمٌ عُمۡىٌ "deaf, dumb and blind".

The verse therefore has not negated their physical ability of seeing, hearing and understanding. Rather, the Holy Qur'ān has affirmed their knowledge about worldly things in the following words,

يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا وَهُمۡ عَنِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمۡ غٰفِلُوۡنَ

"They know the outward aspect of this worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless." (30:7)

In another verse the Holy Qur'ān, speaking the destruction of the people of 'Ād and Thamūd, said: وَكَانُوۡا مُسۡتَبۡصِرِيۡنَ "While they could see clearly." (29:38)

The people of 'Ād and Thamūd being allured by satanic influences involved themselves in evil deeds which led them to their destruction. That is to say they kept the use of their capabilities limited to abject worldly gains like serving their physical needs and remained heedless to their spiritual demands. No matter what great advances they make in science and technology, they may conquer space, explore moon and other planets, make the world full of their sophisticated satellites, and tame the natural forces to serve their varied needs, but all such efforts are no more than a means of serving their physical and material life. It does not go beyond, to seek spiritual peace and comfort. This achievement science and technology of man is certainly confined to serving his physical life only, which does not make him distinct from the animal in technicality. It is why the Holy Qur'ān calls them deaf, dumb and blind because they heard, saw and understood things that belonged to this world only. They did not make proper use of these functions which could lead them to eternal success and peace. The last phrase of this verse said that they are like cattle investing all their effort in serving their bodily desires. Next the verse added بَلۡ هُمۡ اَضَلُّ "Rather they are much more misled." that is, they are far more unwise than are the cattle, because the animals are not bound to follow the laws of the Shari'ah. They have no reward or punishment for their acts. They are required only to serve their physical needs which they are efficiently doing, contrary to human beings who are accountable for everything they do in this world, and they are going to be punished

or rewarded according to their performance. If they confine their effort only to seek material gains of this world and do not make proper use of their faculties, they are certainly more imprudent and unwise as compared to animals.

Verse 180

وَ لِلّٰهِ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى فَادْعُوْهُ بِهَا ص وَذَرُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآئِهٖ ط سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

And for Allah there are the most beautiful names. So, call Him by them, and leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names. They shall be recompensed for what they have been doing. [180]

This verse has a relationship with the preceding verses in the sense that the people of Hell discussed above did not use their abilities in seeking the everlasting comforts of the Hereafter, and made themselves liable to eternal punishment. The present verse has provided with remedy of their disease. That is, seeking help from Allah by calling Him with His good names and often remembering Him through them.

The good names of Allah

The good names are the ones that denote the attributes having the highest degree of perfection. It goes without saying that the perfection of the highest degree is not possessed by any one but Allah. In case of a 'perfect' human being there is always a possibility of someone being higher than him in some qualities. This is what the Qur'ānic phrase has said: وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِيْ عِلْمٍ عَلِيْمٌ "And above every man of knowledge there is someone more knowledgeable." (12:76)

The style of the verse has suggested that these 'beautiful names' are peculiarly meant for Allah. فَادْعُوْهُ بِهَا "So, call Him by them", because there is none other than Allah who owns these attributes, therefore the only one worthy of being called in need is none but He. Calling is a rendering of the word دعاء which has two characteristics: Praising, purifying and remembering Allah, and calling Him for help in times of need or difficulty. It implies, that Allah alone is worthy of praise and glorification and He alone has to be called for help and relief. The verse has also suggested that the best method of calling Him is to call

Him by His Beautiful Names.

Preconditions of *Du'a* (calling Allah)

The verse has provided us with two valuable informations. firstly, there is none other than Allah worthy of praise and worthy of being called for help. Secondly, Allah has provided us with specific words for calling him, proper to His glorious being, as we are not capable of choosing appropriate words for this purpose. That is, we are required to call Him by His attributes of perfections.

Bukhari and Muslim have reported on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

> "There are ninety nine names of Allah. Whoever learns them by heart shall enter paradise."

Tirmidhī and Ḥākim have enumerated these names in detail. Invocations made by reciting these names are generally granted. Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'ān اُدْعُوْنِيْٓ اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ "Call me and I will answer you" (40:60). The most definite and certain method of seeking help in one's need and getting relief from one's distress is calling Allah and praying Him for His help. This is the only way that is certain to meet success. The immediate benefit of praying to Allah is that it is, in itself, a worship. The reward of this worship is included in the sheet of one's deeds.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said in a Tradition: اَلدُّعَاءُ مُخُّ الْعِبَادَةِ "Invoking Allah is the quintessence of worship." The invocation is granted by Allah in many ways. Sometimes, the very thing for which the invocation has been made is granted by Allah, while some other times, when one asks for something untimely or unsuitable for him in the knowledge of Allah is exchanged with something more proper or beneficial for him.

Remembering Allah by glorifying and praising Him is the food for one's Faith in Allah (*'Īmān*) which helps in magnifying the love, respect and awareness of Allah making the hardship of this world worthless in one's eyes.

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī have reported through authentic sources that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said that any one

who finds himself in some difficulty or is distressed with some grief should recite the following words:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيْمُ الْحَلِيْمُ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ

"There is no god but Allah, the Greatest, the Most forbearing, There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the great Throne. There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens, and the earth and the Lord of the Glorious Throne."

Ḥākim in his Mustadrak has reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said to his daughter Sayyidah Faṭimah al-Zahra رضی الله عنها :

"What is there to prevent you from hearing my advice of reciting the following invocation at morning and evening every day?"

يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ اَسْتَغِيْثُ اَصْلِحْ لِيْ شَاْنِيْ كُلَّهٗ وَلَا تَكِلْنِيْ اِلٰى نَفْسِيْ طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ

"O The Alive, The All-Sustaining, I call for help by Your Mercy. Set right every situation that I am in, and do not leave me at the mercy of my innerself for even a wink of an eye."

The above invocation is also an effective remedy of hardships and distress. In short, we have been given two instructions in this verse namely making invocation to Allah alone for seeking help or for pleasing the Creator, secondly, calling Allah by His attributes of perfection without changing them.

The next sentence said:

وَذَرُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآئِهٖ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ

"And leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names. They shall be recompensed for what they had been doing."

The Arabic word اِلْحَاد *'Ilḥād'* signifies to decline from the centre. In Qur'ānic terminology the word *'Ilḥād'* is used for deviating from the correct interpretation of the Qur'ānic words or distorting the meanings of the Qur'ānic message.

The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم has been asked to keep away from

the people who distort or decline from the prescribed names of Allah.

The Deviation from the good names

There are many forms of deviating from the prescribed names of Allah. Firstly, calling Allah by such names as are not specified in the Holy Qur'ān or in the Sunnah. The 'Ulamā' (Scholars) of the *ummah* are unanimous on the point that it is not permissible to call Allah by any names or attributes of one's own choice or to praise Him by the names which have not been specified by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. For example, Allah may be called by the word: نور *Nūr* (light) but not by the word 'white'. Similarly Allah may be called '*Karīm*' (generous) but not by the word '*Sakhī*': سخی having the same meaning. He can be called Shāfī شافی (The one who provides cure from disease) but not '*Tabib*' (The doctor). Though the matching words carry the same meanings they are not allowed simply because they have not been reported by the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.

The second way of deviating from these names of Allah is to abandon certain name or names only because one thinks them to be inappropriate in certain situations. It, obviously, amounts to lack of respect to the glorious names of Allah.

Calling the people with the names of Allah

The third way of deviation from these names is to use any of the good names of Allah for other people. This however, has some exceptions as explained in the following lines:

There are certain names in the list of the glorious names of Allah which have been used by the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* for human beings. Such names can be used for beings other than Allah. For example, Raḥīm, Rashīd, 'Alī, Karīm and 'Azīz etc., while there are other names which denote to exclusive attributes of Allah. Their use for any one other than Allah is an act of deviation from these names. For example, Raḥmān, Razzāq, Subḥān, Khāliq, Quddūs and Ghaffār etc. Using such names for any one other than Allah is prohibited in the Islamic Sharī'ah.

Now, if some one calls any one other than Allah by these names because of his false belief, that he has the attributes denoted by these names it would be an act of infidelity. However, if some one used any

of these names for any one other than Allah just heedlessly and for the lack of knowledge, it would not be an act of infidelity, but having similarities with it would be called a major sin.

It is a pity that Muslims in generral are having a number of wrong practices with regard to naming their children and calling them by improper names.

There is a group of people who have abandoned the practice of naming their children with Islamic names. Their modern names having, non Islamic character, mark it difficult to identify them as Muslims by their names. Specially so, when their general appearance and manners are already devoid of Islamic character. The Islamic female names like Khadījah, 'Ā'ishah, and Fāṭimah have been replaced with Najma, Pervīn, Nasīm, Shamīm and Shahnāz etc.

More doleful practice among Muslims is to heedlessly curtail the Islamic names like 'Abd al-Khāliq, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Razzāq or 'Abd al-Quddūs etc. to Khāliq, Raḥmān, Razzāq and Quddūs when calling people of these names. The attributes Khāliq (the creator) Raḥmān (the Merciful) Razzāq (The sustainer) and Quddūs (The Pure) are all exclusive attributes of Allah and using these attributes for any one other than Allah is a major sin (گناہ کبیرہ). The number of times one calls any one by these attributes only commits a major sin every time and becomes liable of great punishment.

This sinful practice has become quite common among Muslims for no gain. They have been committing this sinful act simply for being thoughtless to the gravity of this error. The present verse has warned against it by saying سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ "They shall soon be recompensed for what they have been doing".

Many evils are committed for certain worldly gains or benefits. Any one committing such evil deed may pretend to offer an excuse that being constrained by some necessity he had committed the sin, while a great number of evil deeds are simply of no avail, and produce no worldly benefit at all. It is a sad situation that people are seen committing such evil deeds just for being careless of the commandments of Allah and being indifferent to what is prohibited or permitted by Allah. May Allah save us from such ignorance.

Verses 181 - 185

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَآ اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨٢﴾
وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ۭاِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا ۫ مَا
بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ۭ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٤﴾ اَوَلَمْ
يَنْظُرُوْا فِيْ مَلَكُوْتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ۙ وَّاَنْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ اَجَلُهُمْ ۚ فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍۢ
بَعْدَهٗ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

And among those We have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [181] **As for those who belie Our signs, We let them be drawn gradually (towards their punishment) from where they do not know.** [182] **And I give them respite. Surely My plan is firm.** [183] **Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner.** [184] **Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into the things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time might have possibly drawn near? In what other word, then, shall they believe after it?** [185]

The previous verses offered a remedy of calling Allah by His good names to those who were neglectfully not making proper use of their faculties. Now the verse 181 speaks of those who followed the right path. The verse said, "And among those we have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. That is, they are a people who guide others to the straight path and decide all their matters according to the dictates of truth (the divine law).

Ibn Jarīr has reported from his own sources that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse and said, "The people referred to in this verse are my people who shall decide their controversies according to justice and truth and observe justice in all their dealings."

'Abd ibn Ḥumaid has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

said addressing his companions, "This verse has been revealed in your favour and prior to you there has been a group of people bearing the same attributes." Then he recited this verse:

وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰٓى اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ

"And among the community of Musa there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby." (7:159)

That is to say, there was a group of people among the Israelites who had the attributes referred to in this verse, of guiding other people to the truth and deciding their matters according to the law of the Torah. Similarly, the Muslim *Ummah* has the same attributes as their distinct feature.

The essence of the message is firstly, to guide people to the right path in accordance with the dictates of the Sharī'ah, and secondly, to decide all their controversies according to the law of Islam. The above two features offer, in fact, the guaranteed way of success, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Any group or individuals who follow the truth and justice in all their modes of life, and do not exhibit their personal prejudices while making judgements even for their enemies, are the people of truth refered to in this verse. The same has been the main characteristic of the Muslim Ummah who strictly observed the demands of truth and justice in all their dealings and overlooked their personal priorities when making judgements between people. The history has recorded unique examples of such truthful practices from the lives of the blessed Companions and their disciples.

From the day the Muslims started to show disregard to these two distinctive features of their character, an evident regression started to show itself in every sphere of their life. Remorsefully though, we have to acknowledge that majority of the Muslim *Ummah* have fallen prey to their personal desires. All their activities, their political, social and educational set ups are motivated by downtrodden worldly gains. Their guidance to other people is mainly aimed at getting some worldly benefits. Most of their family ceremonies are not only devoid of Islamic character, but demonstrate a behaviour opposed to Shari'ah. There are some family traditions designed in the name of religious ceremonies. Any one going against or showing dislike to these innova-

tions has to face active opposition on their part. People are no more interested in organizing themselves purely for the propagation of truth and justice.

There is none to make them realize that this course of thought and action has to bring disaster to the Muslims at large. The only way to restore the dignity of the Muslim *Ummah* and to bring them back to the path of progress and prosperity is to follow the way of truth and justice suggested by this verse. Conscious efforts should be made to create an awareness of these values among the Muslims.

The next verse (182) has provided answer to a common question which bothers the minds of many Muslims. If prosperity and progress can only be achieved by following the way of truth and justice why the non-Muslim nations of the world are seen more prosperous, more advanced and more powerful while they are very far from the truth? The verse answered this question in these words:

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

"As for those who belie our signs, we shall let them be drawn gradually towards (their punishment) from where they do not know."

That is to say, Allah does not punish those who reject the signs or verses of Allah immediately for their sins. He, out His wisdom and Mercy, lets them enjoy their worldly life for a while and then draws them to their ignominious end as gradually as they do not know of their being led to their ill-fate. The present prosperity and progress of the non-Muslims should, therefore, not deceive people, because their prosperity, in fact, is not something propitious for them. Rather it is a kind of respite, a temporary period of relief before the execution of their punishment, which in Qur'ānic terminology is called *Istidrāj* (اِسْتِدْرَاج). *Istidrāj* is a more powerful punishment in disguise. The most essential element of *Istidrāj* is that a person is not punished for his evil deeds immediately; the more he increases in his evil deeds, the more he is increased in prosperity and worldly possessions which prevents him from having a sense of guilty and taking warning against his crimes. Consequently, he is deprived of turning in repentence to Allah and save himself from everlasting punishment. This perverted state of mind makes one take illness as health and poison as

remedy. He is let to go on with his perverted life until death overtakes him and draws him to the eternal chastisement.

The Holy Qur'ān has made mention of *'Istidrāj'* in many other verses. It said in Sūrah al-An'ām:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا
أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ

"So, when they forgot what they were required to remember, We opened to them the gates of everything, until, when they were rejoicing in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, and then they were confounded in despair." (6:44)

Dealing with *Istidrāj* is not limited to disbelievers only. The iniquitous among Muslims are also dealt with this kind of punishment. It was for this reason that our elders used to fear Allah when they were favoured by Him with prosperity and comforts. They feared lest their prosperity should be a sign of *'Istidrāj'*

The next verse (183) is also related with *'Istidrāj'*. It said:

وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ

"And I give them respite. Surely, My plan is firm."

That is, the disbelievers are left to enjoy their worldly life just for a while. Then, they shall be caught by punishment.

The verse no. 184 has refuted the false notion of the disbelievers that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a man of unsound mind or was possessed by devil. It said:

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ

"Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner."

The verse said that a little reflection on their part shall be enough to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was neither a man of unsound mind, nor was he under the influence of Jinns. His matchless wisdom and knowledge is an obvious feature of his personality. Those having claim to wisdom and knowledge are astoundingly bewildered how a man of such extraordinary insight and sagacity could be blamed of madness? Blaming him with madness, in fact, is madness itself. He

is only an elucidator of realities and a warner against the punishment from Allah.

The verse 185 has invited mankind to practice two important things. Firstly, to make thoughtful observation of the creation of Allah, the heavens, the earth and the things existing between them. Secondly, to be mindful of the period of life given to an individual. It does not require to be a genius to perceive the signs of Allah's power and wisdom in every thing around us. A little amount of serious thought is enough to make one see that every thing, rather every particle of this world, is singing the praise of it's Creator and is, in itself, a strong proof of Allah's power and wisdom. Any one applying his intellect in conscious observation of things cannot avoid natural demand of faith in Allah, the One.

Being mindful of uncertain period of one's life makes him more active in attaining his objectives, because he is not sure how much time of life he has at his disposal. It would be noticed that all crimes and evil deeds are activated by disregard to one's death. Those who are conscious of their indefinite period of life mostly avoid to involve themselves in unwanted activities. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

أَكْثِرُوْا ذِكْرَهَاذِمِ اللَّذَّاتِ الْمَوْتُ

> "Frequently remember the thing which eliminates the pleasures - the death."

The verse 185, has therefore said:

"Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time may possibly have drawn near."

The Arabic word مَلَكُوْت (*Malakūt*) signifies kingdom indicating a superlative degree, that is, the great Kingdom. The verse implies that the disbelievers have not used their common intellect in seeking the Truth which is evident in everything created by Allah, nor are they mindful of the uncertainty of life which may come to an end any moment, depriving them of all the chances of accepting the truth and repenting to Allah for their evil deeds. The last sentence of the verse warned them saying:

"In what other word, then, shall they believe after it?" That is Allah has provided them with transparent signs, both internal and external, of the right path and of the True Faith. Those who are neglectful of such clear signs, there is nothing in the world to guide them to the right path.

Verses 186 - 187

مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهٗ ؕ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ
﴿۱۸۶﴾ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰىهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا
عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ ۚ لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا لِوَقْتِهَاۤ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا تَاْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً ؕ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا ؕ قُلْ
اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۷﴾

Whomsoever Allah lets go astray, for him there is no one to give guidance. And He leaves them wandering blindly in their rebellion. [186]

They ask you about the Hour, "When is it due to happen?" Say, "It's knowledge is only with my Lord. No one can unfold it except He, at it's time. It shall weigh heavy in the heavens and the earth. It shall not come upon you but suddenly." They ask you if you were aware of it. Say, "It's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know." [187]

The preceding verses spoke of the obstinate ignorance of the disbelievers who rejected the true Faith, despite all the clear signs given to them by Allah. This could be a source of grief to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he was highly considerate and the greatest well-wisher of the mankind. The verse 186 provides him with a consolation saying that whomsoever Allah leaves wandering in his ignorance and lets him go on with his evil deeds can never be guided by any one and Allah leaves him at the mercy of his abject desires. That is to say, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has done his duty by conveying the message of Allah as explicitly as was possible, and that their rejection of the true faith was not for any of his faults.

Among the themes of this Sūrah (Al-A'rāf) three topics are of great

importance: the unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*), the Prophethood (*Risālah*) and the life in the Hereafter (آخرت). These three principles are, in fact, the mainstay of the whole edifice of Islam. Exposition of the first two principles, the *Tauḥīd* and the *Risālah* have been provided in the foregoing verses.

The verse 187 speaks of the third principle, that is, the life in the Hereafter (آخرت). The revelation of this verse is related with the following incident reported by Ibn Jarīr and 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid on the authority of Qatādah.

The Quraish of Makkah once asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم by way of mockery as to when the Hour of doom was to occur of which he used to warn them so often. The verse was revealed in response to this question.

The Arabic word Sā'ah سَاعَة signifies a short period without specific number of minutes or hours, while in our calendar it is a single unit out of twenty four units of the day and night. In Qur'anic terminology, however, it is used for the day when all the created beings will cease to exist, as well as for the day when all the creation shall be revived and presented before the Lord of all the creations. مُرْسٰی *Mursā* signifies to stop or to stay, لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا is a derivative of تَجْلِيَة which means to disclose or open. *Baghtatan* بَغْتَة means suddenly while the word '*Ḥafiyyun*' حَفِيٌّ is used for a scholar or a knowledgeable person according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ. The word is generally used for a person who invests his effort and employs all his resources to ascertain something.

The quintessence of the verse, therefore, is that the Quraish of Makkah should be answered that the exact time of the Doom is not known, and shall never be made known to any one. It is a divine secret which shall disclose itself by it's sudden occurence, as has been decided by the Qur'ānic phrase لَا تَأْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً "It shall not come upon you but suddenly".

Al-Bukhārī and the Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said

with regard to sudden occurence of the '*Qiyāmah*' (The Doomsday) that it has been made a close secret. The wisdom behind it is obviously to make people live their lives peacefully which would have not been possible in case the definite time of death was known to them. Besides, those who do not believe in Doomsday would have made mockery of it by knowing the remotely long period of it's occurence. The divine wisdom chose to keep it undefined in order to keep people vaguely in fear of it's dreadful events which, in fact, is an effective measure against crime and corrupt practices.

By implication, the above verses make us alive to the fact that once we have come to believe that the day of *Qiyāmah* has inevitably to come and all the created beings shall necessarily be presented before the Lord of all the creation and be called to account for all their minor or major deeds, and shall be rewarded or punished according to their performance in this world, the knowledge of time and period of the death becomes immaterial. It will not be wise to waste precious time of one's life in futile discussions like the time of occurrence of the Doomsday. On the contrary, human reason and wisdom demands that every moment of uncertain period of life is spent carefully in preparing oneself for the great day of judgement. This answer to the Quraish of Makkah made it clear that their question regarding the time of the Doomsday was a product of their ignorance. The next phrase of this verse speaks of another misconception of the disbelievers of Makkah. It said:

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا

"They ask you as if you were aware of it."

They thought that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had, somehow, secured the knowledge of the exact time of the occurrence of the Doomsday and that he was not disclosing it for some purpose. They insisted him to disclose it to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to answer them in these words:

قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَاللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَالنَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

"Say, it's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people

do not know."

That is, it is not necessary for a prophet to know the definite time of the Doomsday or certain other matters that are kept secret by Allah. The lack of knowledge in such matters on the part of a prophet cannot, therefore, be taken as a proof against his prophethood. (The knowledge of a prophet can never be equal to the All-encompassing knowledge of Allah.)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , however, was given knowledge of certain specific signs indicating that the Doomsday was in proximity. He has informed the Muslim *Ummah* of all these signs in explicit terms in his Traditions. In one of such Traditions he said that his appearance and the Day of *Qiyāmah* were as close to each other as two fingers of a hand. (Tirmidhī)

As for the reports giving the total age of this world as seven thousand years, they are the reports borrowed from some Israelite literature in certain Islamic books. They are neither authentic nor do they have any basis in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Similarly, geo-physical data of modern knowledge giving the age of this world as millions of years do not confront or contradict any of the Qur'ānic verse or any authentic Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressing the Muslim *Ummah* said in a Tradition:

> "When compared to the early people, you are like a white thread of hair on the body of a black ox."

This gives us an idea of the enormous age of this world as thought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥazm of Spain has, therefore, concluded that the exact age of this world cannot be assessed by any one. [1] (Marāghni)

1. By inference it seems physically impossible to have an exact assessment of the age of this universe, because it would give the exact time of the end of this universe which has been precluded by the above verse saying that the knowledge of the occurrence of the Doomsday is not known to any one but Allah. (Translator)

Verses 188 - 193

قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِیْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ
اَعْلَمُ الْغَیْبَ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَیْرِ ۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِیَ السُّوْٓءُ ۚ اِنْ اَنَا
اِلَّا نَذِیْرٌ وَّبَشِیْرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ یُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ
نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِیَسْكُنَ اِلَیْهَا ۚ فَلَمَّا
تَغَشّٰىهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِیْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا
اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ اٰتَیْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِیْنَ ﴿١٨٩﴾
فَلَمَّاۤ اٰتٰىهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهٗ شُرَكَآءَ فِیْمَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمَا ۚ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ
عَمَّا یُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ اَیُشْرِكُوْنَ مَا لَا یَخْلُقُ شَیْـًٔا وَّهُمْ
یُخْلَقُوْنَ ﴿١٩١﴾ وَلَا یَسْتَطِیْعُوْنَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَّلَاۤ اَنْفُسَهُمْ
یَنْصُرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ وَاِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا یَتَّبِعُوْكُمْ ؕ سَوَآءٌ
عَلَیْكُمْ اَدَعَوْتُمُوْهُمْ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ صٰمِتُوْنَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

Say, "I have no power to bring a benefit or a harm to myself, except what Allah wills. And if I had the knowledge of the unseen, I would have accumulated a lot of good, and no evil would have touched me. I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." [188] **He is the One who has created you from a single soul, and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her. So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it, thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If You bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful."** [189] **But when We blessed them with a perfect child, they ascribed partners to Him in what We blessed them with. So, far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him.** [190]

Do they associate those with Allah who do not create anything, rather, they are created (themselves)? [191] **And they (the alleged partners) cannot extend to them any help, nor can they help themselves.** [192] **And if you**

call them to the right path, they shall not follow you. It is all the same for them whether you call them or remain silent. [193]

The Verse 188 clears away a common misbelief of the people regarding the prophets of Allah. They thought that the prophets must possess the knowledge of each and everything in the universe, including the knowledge of the unseen future and unknown past. Similarly, they thought that the prophets must possess the power of bringing benefit or harm to any one out of their own will. The verse made it clear that the all-encompassing knowledge is an exclusive attribute of Allah which cannot be ascribed to any created being. Ascribing these exclusive attributes to any one other than Allah is the greatest transgression and is tantamount to associating partners with Allah. The very purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān and the advent of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been to eliminate all the traces of plurality of god and to establish the purest unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*).

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been asked to declare that, not to speak of others, even he was unable to harm or benefit himself and that he did not possess the knowledge of the unseen. Had he possessed such knowledge, he would have stored all the good for himself and would have saved himself from every possible harm. There are evident instances in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم could not achieve his objectives inspite of all his effort, and in many other instances, he could not save himself from the damages and harm that reached him. The incident of the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah is an evident example when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and his companions travelled all the way to Makkah in order to perform the 'Umrah but were stopped by the unbelievers of Makkah. Despite all their desire and effort, they had to go back to Madīnah without performing 'Umrah. similarly, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was wounded in the battle of Uḥud and the Muslims faced temporary defeat.

Perhaps, such events were allowed to happen, so that it may be demonstrated in practical terms that the Prophets, with due regards to their being closest to Allah and being the best of all the human beings, did not possess divine power and encompassing knowledge.

They were human like other human beings. The Christians fell prey to the same error. They ascribed the divine attributes of Allah to their Prophet and went astray.

The Prophets, however, are invested by Allah with as much knowledge and power as no other human being has ever acquired. They Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was certainly favoured with the degree of knowledge which surpassed the knowledge of all other prophets. He informed the Muslims of many things which were to happen in future. All his foretellings were seen to happen exactly as he had foretold.

We can say that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was given the knowledge of a number of unseen things, but in Qur'ānic terminology this is not termed as "عِلْمُ الْغَيْب" (the knowledge of the unseen). Therefore, on the basis of this we are not allowed to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ عَالِمُ الْغَيْب (the knower of the unseen), as knower of the unseen is none other than Allah.

The last sentence of the verse said, اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ وَّبَشِيْرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ "I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." That is, he has been assigned the duty of warning the evil doers against the punishment of Allah and give the good tidings of great reward by Allah to those who are righteous.

The next verse 189 speaks of the most basic belief of Islām that is Tauḥīd and, at the same time, brings out the falsity of believing in more than one god. In the beginning of the verse Allah سبحانه و تعالى has mentioned the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام which was a manifestation of His perfect power. The verse said:

هُوَالَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ اِلَيْهَا

"He is the One who has created you from a single soul and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her."

This manifestation of Allah's great Power should have made mankind more grateful to Allah and they must have abstained from associating partners with Allah, but negligent as they were, they acted differently. Their neglectful attitude has been referred to in this verse and in the next, in these words:

فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ فَلَمَّآ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ

اٰتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِيْنَ۝فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهٗ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰهُمَا فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it. Thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If you bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful." So, when Allah blessed them with a perfect one, they ascribed partners with Him."

That is to say, at the initial stage of pregnancy the woman feels free to move about, but later when fetus grows heavy in her womb, the parents are anxious about their unborn. They are not sure if they would get a perfect child, because there are occasions when new born is not a normal child or is deaf dumb or blind etc. Having such apprehensions, they start praying for a perfect child and make promises with Allah to be grateful to Him if He favours them with a perfect child. Now, when Allah grants their prayers by giving them a normal and healthy baby, they ascribe partners with Allah, and thus their children, themselves, become the source of their misguidance.

It happens in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are misled by their false belief that their new born is a gift of some holy or godly person. Sometimes, they devote it to some living or dead person and start making offerings in their names. Some people take their children to them and bow their forehead before them. Sometimes, they involve themselves in Shirk شرك by naming their children like 'Abdullāt عبداللات 'Abd ul 'Uzza عبدالعزى 'Abdul Shams عبدالشمس or Bandah 'Alī بنده على etc., assigning their children to false gods, indicating that these children have been created or gifted by these gods or personalities. In short, all the above acts or beliefs are different forms of 'Shirk' شرك and the worst kind of ungratefulness to Allah, their Lord. The last sentence of this verse confirms misguidance of such people by saying:

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him."

The above interpretation of this verse has made it clear that by referring to the Prophet 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' (Eve) عليهما السلام in the first sentence of this verse, the children of 'Ādam have been asked to follow

him and show their gratefulness to Allah, while the rest of the verse speaks of the misguidance and perversion of their descendants who, instead of being grateful to their Lord ascribed partners to Him.

This makes it clear that the Prophet 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' علیهما السلام have nothing to do with those who ascribed partners with Allah. The verse refers to the generations coming after them who were ungrateful to Allah and involved themselves in Shirk شرك . We have adopted this interpretation on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ reported by Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, in Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr. The story related by Tirmidhī and Ḥākim about 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' being deceived by Satan has been taken by some scholars as an unauthentic Israelite report which is liable to be rejected. Many Muḥaddithīn, the scholars in *Ḥadīth* have, on the other hand, confirmed it. The above interpretation, however, clears away any possible doubt even if the story is taken to be authentic.

The above verse has provided us with the following points of significant value.

1. The men and women have been created in the same species in order that they may have a natural affinity and perfect understanding with each other, and discharge their duties towards the construction of a good society.

Havoc caused by immodesty

2. The rights and obligations assigned to the married couple basically aim at providing a peaceful environment at home. There are many social behaviours of modern age that are directly opposed to the above objective of creating a peaceful atmosphere. For example, the so called freedom of woman has caused havoc to social peace. The alarming number of divorces and serious altercations are mostly the result of free mixing of men and women in society. By experience we know that the growth of immodest practices in society is propotional to the destruction of social values and deprives man of peace at home and in the society.

3. The third point refers to the naming of one's children. It is prohibited to give names to the children like 'Abdul Shams (The slave of the Sun) or 'Abd al 'Uzzā (The slave of 'Uzzā) which purport to

assign them to entities other than Allah. Giving such names is prohibited even if parents do not really mean it. This practice is a great sin in Islām.

4. The best way of offering our gratitude to Allah is to name our children after the good names of Allah and His Messenger. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, therefore, recommended the names like 'Abd ur Raḥmān, and 'Abdullāh etc.

It is a pity that, one by one, we are depriving ourselves of all the Islamic manners and values. Firstly, we give our children non Islamic names simply following the fashion of the non-Islamic cultures. In addition, we find that most of the parents abbreviate the names of their children into English initials which makes it all the more difficult to distinguish them as Muslims. specially so, when we have worn the appearance of the non-Muslims, altogether. May Allah favour us with the real understanding of Islām and Islamic values.

Verses 194 - 198

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ
يَمْشُونَ بِهَا ز أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا ز أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ
بِهَا ز أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ط قُلِ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ
كِيدُونِ فَلَا تُنْظِرُونِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ إِنَّ وَلِيِّيَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتٰبَ صلے
وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَإِنْ
تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَسْمَعُوا ط وَتَرٰىهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ
لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

Surely, those whom you call beside Allah are slaves like you. So, call them and they should respond to you if you are true. [194] **Do they have legs to walk with? Or do they have hands to grip with? Or do they have eyes to see with? Say, "Call to your associate-gods, then, plot against me and allow me no respite.** [195] **Surely, my**

protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous." [196]

And those whom you call beside Him cannot help you, nor can they help themselves. [197] **And if you call them for guidance, they shall not hear. And you see them looking at you while they do not see.** [198]

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to say to the unbelievers that your false gods are nothing but slaves like you, and being devoid of essential faculties of moving, seeing, hearing and speaking cannot help themselves, far from coming to your help in your need. If you are not sure, then "Call them and they should respond to you," and "Call to your associate-gods, then plot against me and allow me no respite."

The verse 196 has said:

إِنَّ وَلِيِّۦَ اللَّهُ الَّذِىْ نَزَّلَ الْكِتٰبَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ

"Surely my protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous."

The Arabic word ولى rendered here as 'protector' also means helper. The word الكتاب (The Book) here refers to the Holy Qur'ān, and the word صالحين (the righteous), according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه , here refers to all those who do not take any one equal to Allah, including the prophets and other faithful Muslims.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that he was not fearful of their opposition in the least since Allah, who had revealed the Qur'ān to Him was his protector and helper. It may be noted that out of all the divine attributes of Allah, this verse spoke specially of His revelation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It is because the only reason of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ was his invitation to the message of the Holy Qur'ān. He was therefore, sure to have been helped and protected by Allah. The next sentence provides us with a general rule that Allah does not only help and protect His messengers who have special favours of Allah, but also helps and protects all the Muslims who are righteous.

The last sentence وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ "He helps and protects the righteous" has given us a general principle that in addition to helping the

prophets who hold the highest status among all the people, Allah helps and protects all the Muslims who act righteously. Therefore, the opposition or hostility of any one does not harm a true Muslim in the real sense of the word. Most often he is made to triumph over his enemies in this very world. If, for some good reason, he does not overcome and is apparently defeated, this, too, does not go to damage his real objective. His failure in this world is, in fact, his success in true sense, because the main objective of his life is to seek Allah's pleasure and to obey Him in each and every activity of his life. His failure, being from Allah draws him nearer to his objective of seeking Allah's pleasure.

Verses 199 - 202

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ وَإِمَّا
يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ
﴿٢٠٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوْا
فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّوْنَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ
لَا يُقْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant. [199] **And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.** [200] **Surely those who are God-fearing, when they are touched by a visit from Satan, they become conscious, and, at once they are watchful.** [201] **As for the brethren of Satans, the satans drag them on into the error, and they do not stop short.** [202]

The Ideal Manifesto of Qur'ānic Ethics

The above verse provides us with a perfect code and model discipline of moral excellences. It was through this discipline that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was trained and then was conferred with the title of صاحب خلق عظیم (The manifestation of all moral excellences) which is unique to him out of the whole mankind. After giving a description of obstinate ignorance, and immoral behaviour of the adversaries of Islam in the foregoing verses, the Holy Qur'ān, in contrast to the above, provides the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with some moral teach-

ings. The first is خُذِ الْعَفْوَ (Take to forbearance). The Arabic word عفو , has many significations. Each of them can be taken to mean here. This is why the experts in the exegesis of the Qur'ān have presented varied comments on this verse. The most agreed interpretation of this word is that it is an act which can be done with ease or without any difficulty. The first sentence therefore, shall mean "Accept what people can do easily," implying that, in the matter of Islamic obligations, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should not demand high standard of deeds from the people. Rather, he should accept the degree of perfection which can be achieved easily by the people.

To make it more clear, let us take the example of *Ṣalāh* (the prayer) which in true sense means to isolate oneself from all the worldly thoughts and actions and stand before his Lord in perfect veneration. He is supposed to present his praise to his Lord directly as though he is addressing his Lord and making his supplications to Him directly with nothing and no one between him and His Lord.

This state of mind shows itself in a worshipper by some expressive signs like خشوع و خضوع (submission and humbleness), which are achieved only by a few fortunate worshippers. This degree of veneration and love cannot be expected from all the worshippers. This verse has therefore, asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to demand the high standard of performance from the people, and to accept what degree of perfection they can achieve easily in their deeds.

The above interpretation has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair رضى الله عنه. Another report cited by Ibn Kathīr, has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, at the time of the revelation of this verse, said, "I have been commanded (by Allah) to accept common or unexceptional obedience from the people in their worships and behaviour. I have, therefore, decided to do the same as long as I am in their company." A large number of the exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the scholar Mujāhid have confirmed the same meaning of this Qur'ānic phrase.

Another meaning of the word عفو is to pardon or to forgive. Some of the exegetes have adopted this meaning here. According to them this Qur'ānic phrase has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to pardon the

errors and shortcomings of the people.

Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the great exegete of the Holy Qur'ān has reported that at the time of revelation of this verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the Archangel Jibra'īl about the implication of this verse. The Archangel after confirming the meaning from Allah answered that you have been commanded to pardon the one who does you wrong, and to be generous to the one who gives you nothing, and to continue your relation with one who breaks off his connections with you.

Under the comment on this verse Ibn Marduwaih has reported, on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'ad ibn 'Ubādah, that this verse was revealed when, in the battle of Uḥud, Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضی الله عنه was martyred and parts of his body were savagely cut off. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم , seeing his body in such miserable condition, said, "I shall behave to seventy of their people the way they have behaved with Ḥamzah." This verse was revealed to him implying that it does not suit his dignified position. He should pardon and forgive people.

This is supported by another Ḥadīth reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir رضی الله عنه saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had instructed him of the same. That is, to pardon the one who does wrong to him, to keep relation with one who cuts off his relation with him and to give the one who deprives him. Bayhaqi also has reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said to him. 'I teach you the manners better than the manners of all the early and the later people, that you should give the one who deprives you, pardon the one who does wrong to you and continue your relation with one who breaks off with you.

The above two meanings of the word عفو though, are different from each other but the purest essence of both is one and the same, that is, he should not demand the high standard of worship and deeds from the people and pardon them for their errors, and should not take revenge of their wrongs, and be generous to them with no regard to recieving any return from them.

The authentic records of the life of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم have shown that he demonstrated the truest picture of the above

Qur'ānic model of deeds and morals. This model appeared in full bloom when Makkah was conquered and his sworn enemies were at his mercy. At that time, he set all of them free saying that 'far from any thoughts of seeking any revenge against them for their injustices, he would not even blame them in any way for what had happened between them in the past.'

The second sentence of this manifesto or testament reads: وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ (and bid the Fair – 199). The word: عُرْف (*'urf*) meaning 'recognized' refers to everything done in a way which is good and praiseworthy. The sense is that he should not seek to avenge the oppressive treatment meted out to him by his enemies, rather, he should forgive them but, along with it, he should also continue to ask them to do what was good and beneficial. Thus, he would not only be repaying evil with good and injustice with justice alone, in fact, he would be repaying them for all that by a higher degree of favor and grace – that of *Iḥsān*.

In the third sentence, it was said: وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ (and ignore the ignorant). It means that he should, no doubt, forgo revenge against injustice, deal with his enemies having goodwill and concern for them, and softly explain the truth of the matter to them. But, in this process, there will be those ignorant diehards who would not still be impressed or affected by this highly gentle moral response. They would, in spite of that, display more of their ignorance and harshness. If so, he was advised not to be affected by their heart-rending comments and rustic challenges, offer no response in their terms, instead, stay away from and ignore them.

Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has said that 'to ignore' also means that he should not repay evil with evil. It does not mean that he should stop giving good advice to them, for this would not be befitting in terms of the standing mission a prophet and messenger of Allah is charged with.

At this stage, according to an event reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, it was during the period of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ that 'Uyaiynah ibn Hiṣn came to Madīnah and stayed there as a guest of his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays. Sayyidnā Ḥurr was among the learned men of Madīnah who used to attend the advisory council of Sayyidnā 'Umar.

'Uyaiynah said to his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays, 'you are close to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. Take an appointment for me to see him.' Sayyidnā Ḥurr ibn Qays requested Sayyidnā 'Umar that his uncle, 'Uyaiynah wanted to meet him. He gave the permission.

But, once 'Uyaiynah was in the company of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, he spoke to him in a manner that was uncivilized and contrary to facts while complaining that he neither gave them their full rights nor treated them with justice and equity. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه was angry. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ḥurr ibn Qays submitted, *'yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, Allah Ta'ālā has said: خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ (Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant – 199) and this person too is one of the ignorant ones.' Hearing this verse, his anger subsided and he said nothing to him. This habit of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه was well known. About him it was said: كَانَ وَقَّافًا عِنْدَ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ (He readily mellowed before the commandments of the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted).

This verse carries a comprehensive statement of noble traits of character. Some scholars have explained these briefly by saying that there are two kinds of people: (1) Those who are good in deeds and (2) those who are evil and unjust. This verse tells us to treat both kinds nobly. As for those who do good, accept what they offer as such. Do not investigate too much and do not be unnecessarily inquisitive. Do not demand good at its highest from them and accept what they come up with as sufficient. As for the evildoing, the instruction given is: Teach them to do what is good. Show them the way of righteousness. If they do not accept it and choose to stick to their straying and error and talk haughtily and aggressively, the appropriate course is to stay away from them and avoid responding to their ignorant comments. It is hoped that this approach may bring them round at some stage when they may realize their error.

In the second verse, it was said: وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ إِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah – 200).

This verse too is really a complement of the subject taken up in the first verse which instructs that the error made by the unjust and the ignorant should be forgiven and the evil done by them should not be

answered by counter evil. This is heavy duty. In fact, doing something like this is most irksome and hard on human temperament. Particularly on occasions such as this, the Shaiṭān is there to coax someone very normal into anger and somehow gets his client all set to fight. Therefore, in the second verse, it has been suggested that in case emotions of anger seem to be flaring up on such an occasion where your patience is under test, one should promptly figure out that this instigation is coming from the Shaiṭān. It has a standard treatment – seek refuge with Allah.

It appears in Ḥadīth that two men were quarreling before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and one of them was getting out of control in his fit of anger. He looked at him and said, 'I know some words which, if this person were to say, his rage will go away.' Then, he said, 'here are the words: أَعُوْذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (I seek refuge with Allah from the Shaiṭān, the Accursed). When this person heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reciting it, he immediately said it after him. Suddenly, his anger was all gone.

An Unusual Coincidence

At this stage, the great Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has written about an unusual coincidence. He says that there are three verses in the entire Qur'ān that appear as an embodiment of high moral teaching – and all three of them conclude with the need to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. One of these is this very verse of Sūrah al-A'rāf we are talking about. The second one is the following verse of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn:

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُوْنَ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ وَاَعُوْذُبِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ

"Repel the evil with what is good. We know best what they keep saying and you say: 'O my Lord, I seek refuge with You against the urgings of the Satans, and O my Lord, I seek refuge with You from that they be with me – 23:97, 98."

The third verse appears in Sūrah Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah (also referred to as Sūrah Fuṣṣilat):

وَلَا تَسْتَوِى الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ؕ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِيْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيْمٌ ۔ وَمَا يُلَقّٰهَآ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ، وَمَا يُلَقّٰهَآ اِلَّا

ذُوْحَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ . وَاِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ، اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ .

(And good and bad deeds are not equal. Repel with that which is better, whereupon he – between whom and you there was enmity – will be as if a fast friend. [34] And this quality is granted to none but those who observe patience, and this quality is granted to none but he who is endowed with a great fortune. [35] And if you are stricken with a strike from the Shaiṭān, then, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [36] – 41:34-36)

In these three verses, instruction has been given to forgo and forgive people who incite anger, to return evil with good and, along with it, to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. This tells us that the Shaiṭān takes special interest in human quarrels. Give them any opportunity where a quarrel is on, the Satans converge on it as their favorite hunting ground. No matter how sedate and forbearing someone happens to be, they would still incite him into anger and try to make them cross the limits.

There is a treatment for it. When a person sees his anger getting out of control, he should know that Shaiṭān is winning against his better self. He should then turn to Allah Ta'ālā and seek refuge with Him. This makes noble traits of character flourish at their best. Therefore, additional stress has been laid on the need to seek the protection of Allah against the Shaitan in the third (201) and fourth (202) verses as well.

Verses 203 - 204

وَاِذَا لَمْ تَاْتِهِمْ بِاٰيَةٍ قَالُوْا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا ۭ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ مِنْ رَّبِّيْ ۚ هٰذَا بَصَاۗىِٕرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۳﴾ وَاِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْاٰنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ وَاَنْصِتُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۰٤﴾

And when you do not bring them a sign, they say, "Could you not make up one?" Say, "I only follow what is revealed to me from my Lord." This is (a Book of)

insights from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [203]

And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it and be silent, so that you may be blessed. [204]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is the proof that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the true Messenger of Allah. Also answered there are doubts raised by his antagonists. Then, as a corollary, some religious injunctions have been taken up.

To prove that they are Messengers of Allah, all prophets, may peace be upon them all, are given miracles. It was in consonance with it that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among prophets, was blessed with so many miracles which exceed the number of those given to past prophets and which are clear too.

The miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as proved from the Qur'ān, and authentic Ḥadīth reports, are fairly numerous. Muslim religious scholars have written separate books about them. 'Allāmah Jalālu 'd-Dīn as-Suyuṭī's book, al-Khaṣāiṣ al-Kubrā, in two volumes, is a well-known work on this subject.

But, despite the manifestation of so many miracles, his opponents stuck to their unreasonable demands asking for ever-new miracles of their choice. This has also been mentioned earlier in this very Sūrah.

The first of the two verses cited above provides an answer to their demand as a matter of principle. To put it briefly, the miracle of a prophet is a testimony and proof of his mission as a Messenger of Allah. Take the example of the claim of a plaintiff that stands proved by some trustworthy evidence. The other party has not challenged it in any way. If so, no court in the world would give this party the right to demand from the plaintiff that it would accept the claim only when he produces its evidence from a number of particularly specified people. And that the said party would, without challenging the present evidence, not accept it. Therefore, after having seen so many manifest miracles, the antagonists had no right to say that they would take him to be a Messenger of Allah only if he were to show their custom-ordered miracles. This is nothing but a hostile demand that no court of justice would accept as valid.

So, in the first verse (203), it was said when he does not show them the miracle specified by them, they use it as a pretext to deny that he was a Messenger of Allah. Had he been one, he would have shown them the miracle of their choice! The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell them that his mission does not call for the showing of miracles on his own. Instead, his basic mission was to follow the injunctions sent to him by his Lord through the medium of *Waḥy* (revelation) and it included the task of their preaching as well. Therefore, he was busy doing what he was assigned to do. As for the verification of his status as a Messenger of Allah, the miracles already manifested before them were more than enough for that purpose. Now that they have already seen those, the demand for some particular miracle is nothing but an exercise in hostility that is not worth noticing.

Then, out of the miracles shown, the Qur'ān by itself is a great miracle. It has challenged the whole world to come up with a small Sūrah the like of it and it has failed to do so. This, then, is an open sign that the Qur'ān is no human word, instead, is the inimitable Word of Allah, the most exalted.

For this reason, it was said: هٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (This is (a Book of) insights from your Lord). It means that this Qur'ān has come from your Lord as a compendium of many proofs and miracles. Whoever deliberates into it, even summarily, could not part with it without believing that it was nothing but the Word of Allah, the most exalted, and that nothing created has anything to do with it. After that, it was said: وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ (and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe). It means that, no doubt, this Qur'ān is a proof of what is true for the whole world, but it is an escort to the purpose of life and a medium of deserving the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā only for those who believe in it.

In the second verse (204), we have been told that the Holy Qur'ān has come as mercy for the believers. But, in order to benefit from this mercy, there are some conditions and rules of conduct. These have been delineated in the form of a general address as: وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْاٰنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ وَأَنْصِتُوْا (And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it and be silent).

There are different reports about the background of these verses and about whether this injunction has appeared about the recitation of

the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or in Khuṭbah, or relates to the recitation of the Qur'ān in an absolute sense, be it in Ṣalāh or Khuṭbah or in some other condition. But, according to the majority of commentators, the correct position is that the way the words of the verse are general, so the rule laid down therein too is generally applicable to all conditions - except some particular occasions.

Therefore, the followers of Ḥanafī School hve taken this verse to prove that the persons offering their prayer behind an Imām (i.e. the *muqtadīs*) should not recite. Even Muslim jurists who have directed the *muqtadīs* to recite *Alfātiḥah* behind the Imām, they too, having kept this verse in view have suggested that a *muqtadī* should recite only in an interval when the Imām is silent. However, this is not the appropriate occasion to take up this debate. Those interested may refer to standard works, brief or detailed, written by scholars on the issue.

The main subject of the verse is not but that the people for whom the Qur'ān has been declared to be mercy should realize the condition that they have to recognize the etiquette and respect aligned with the Qur'ān and observe it literally in practice. Then, the cardinal etiquette of the Qur'ān is that listeners should lend their ears to it when recited and remain silent.

The sense of lending ears to it not only includes listening to it but also obeying it and making the effort of acting in accordance with its injunctions. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī) Then, by saying: لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (so that you may be blessed) at the end of the verse, a clear hint is given that the mercy of Qur'ān depends on the observance of rules of etiquette mentioned above.

Some important rules relating to listening and remaining silent when Qur'ān is being recited

In contrast with what has been said above, it is obvious that whoever flouts these rules and shows disrespect to the Qur'ān will deserve Divine wrath, not mercy.

As for listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān in the Ṣalāh and remaining silent therein, Muslims generally know about it - though, they do fall short in practice. Some of them would not even be aware of

the Sūrah recited by the Imām. For such people, it is imperative that they should realize the greatness of the Qur'ān, and listen to it attentively. This Islamic legal norm applies to the Khuṭbah of Jumu'ah etc. In addition to this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has particularly said about the Khuṭbah:

اذا خرج الامام فلا صلوة ولا كلام

> When the Imām comes out (for Khuṭbah), then, there is no Ṣalāh and no conversation.

And it also appears in a Ḥadīth that no one should say anything to anyone during *Khuṭbah*, not even a verbal advice is allowed to be given to another person to keep silence (if it has to be done, making a sign by hand should be enough). The objective is to emphasize that, during the Khuṭbah, no conversation of any kind, *tasbīḥ, durūd* or *Ṣalāh* or acts of similar nature are permissible.

Muslim jurists have said that the rule which applies to the Khuṭbah of Jumu'ah applies to the Khuṭbah of the two *'Eid* prayers and that of Nikāḥ (marriage) for, at that time, listening to it and remaining silent is obligatory (*wājib*).

However, in case someone is reciting on his own under usual conditions other than Ṣalāh and Khuṭbah, the question arises: Will others be required to be silent and listen to it? Whether or not would it be obligatory (*wājib*) on them? The positions taken by Muslim jurists in this matter differ. Some consider listening and remaining silent in this condition too as *wājib* and doing against it a sin. It is for this reason that they have ruled that it is not permissible for anyone to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice at places where people are busy doing their chores or are resting. They have also said that anyone who recites the Qur'ān in a loud voice in such surroundings shall be a sinner. This is as it appears in Khulāṣatu l-Fatāwā and other juristic works.

But, some other jurists have distinguished different situations from one another by saying that listening attentively is *wājib* only on occasions where the Qur'ān is being recited for the express purpose of being listened to – such as, in Ṣalāh and Khuṭbah etc. And should it be that someone is reciting on his own, or some people are doing their own recitation at one place, then, it is not *wājib* to listen and be silent.

The reason is that it stands proved on the authority of sound Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite the Qur'ān in his nightly prayers in a raised voice. At that time, his blessed wives would be sleeping. At times, his voice could also be heard from outside his roomette.

There is a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. It says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made a stop on his journey and when morning came he said , 'I recognized my Ash'arite companions by the voices of their recitation of Qur'ān during the darkness of the night and was able to pinpoint the direction and location of their tents – though, I had no idea during the day as to where they stay.

This event shows that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never asked these Asharite companions as to why they were reciting the Qur'ān in a loud voice, nor did he tell those sleeping that they all had to get up and listen to the Qur'ān when it was being recited.

As based on narratives such as these, jurists have given some leeway in the case of recitation outside Ṣalāh. But, they all consider it better and preferable to listen and be silent when the sound of the recitation of the Qur'ān comes from somewhere – even if it is outside the Ṣalāh. For this reason, in places where people are resting or working, it is not appropriate to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice.

This exposes the error of people who turn their radios to full volume at the time some program of recitation from the Qur'an comes on the air, particularly at places and gatherings where the crowd would not listen to it attentively. Similarly, the practice of relaying the recitation of the Qur'ān from the public address systems of mosques late at night, in a manner that the sound goes out and disturbs the sleep of the sleeping or the work of the working, is not correct.

'Allāmah ibn al-Humām has written that, at the time the Imām in Ṣalāh, or the Khaṭīb in Khuṭbah, is reciting something about the Jannah or Jahannam, then, at that time, it is not permissible even to pray for Jannah or seek refuge from Jahannam. The reason is that, according to this verse, the promise of mercy from Allah Ta'ālā is for the person who remains silent when the Qur'ān is being recited – and whoever does not remain silent, to him the promise does not apply.

Yes, if one supplicates voicelessly after the recitation of such verses during his *nafl* prayers, it is an act proved by Sunnah, and is worthy of reward as well. (Maẓharī)

Verses 205 – 206

وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخِيْفَةً وَّدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَيُسَبِّحُوْنَهٗ وَلَهٗ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ السجدة

And remember your Lord in your self with humility and fear, and without speaking loudly, in mornings and evenings, and do not be among the heedless. [205] **Surely, those who are with your Lord are not arrogant against His worship, and they proclaim His purity, and before Him they prostrate.** [206]

Commentary

That the Holy Qur'ān should be listened to and that due etiquette should be observed when doing so was the subject in previous verses. Described in the present two verses, as held by the majority of commentators, is the injunction to remember Allah, in an absolute sense, as well as its attending etiquette – which includes the recitation of the Qur'ān. However, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the word: ذکر (*dhikr*: remembrance) as it appears in this verse means the Qur'ān, and the rules of etiquette enunciated therein are also related to its recitation. But, this does not make much of a difference because according to the consensus of all, other modes of remembrance (*adhkār*: plural of *dhikr*), in addition to the Qur'ān, are governed by the same injunction and the same rules of etiquette.

In short, in this verse, human beings have been commanded to remember Allah and told when to do it and how to do it.

Rules of Voiced and Voiceless Remembrance [*Dhikr*]

The first rule of etiquette relates to the doing of Dhikr in a lowered or loud voice. The Holy Qur'ān has given two choices about that in this verse. It can be made secretly and voicelessly and it can be made

openly and loudly. About the voiceless Dhikr, it was said: وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ which has been translated here literally as 'and remember your Lord in your self' (or, in your heart). This too would, take two forms: (1) That one does not move his tongue and simply thinks of Allah and His attributes in his heart that is known as *al-dhikr-al-khafiyy* (Dhikr of the heart) or *tafakkur* (pondering). (2) That one brings his tongue in alignment with what is happening in the deep recesses of his heart, lowers his voice and renders the letters carrying Divine names. The most preferred form of doing it is to first understand the sense of what is being said. Then, in synchronization with it, let him do two things simultaneously: Be fully conscious of its presence in his heart with his span of attention riveted to it and then, verbalize it too. The reason is that this is a form in which the tongue also joins in the Dhikr along with the heart. And if someone were to remain devoted to the thought within his heart alone, without uttering any word from his tongue, that too is a reward-worthy act in its own place. However, the lowest degree of it would be uttering the words of Dhikr but the heart stays denuded with it, even heedless towards it. About a Dhikr like that, the great sage, Rūmī said:

بر زباں تسبیح ودر دل گاؤخر　　ایں چنیں تسبیح کے دارد اثر

On the tongue, glory to God
Cow and donkey in the heart!
What remembrance is it?
How effective will it be?

What sage Rūmī means is that Dhikr made through a heedless heart brings no vestiges and blessings of the genuine act of Dhikr. It does not rule out the reward and benefit that may issue forth from what may be a bland verbal Dhikr because there are occasions when this very verbal Dhikr becomes the channel, source and cause of the Dhikr of the heart. The constant utterance of the tongue starts affecting the heart as well. In case that does not materialize, no less is the satisfaction that there is at least one part of the body busy with the Dhikr of Allah. If so, that too is not devoid of its benefits and rewards. Therefore, people who fail to experience peace, attention and sense of presence in their Dhikr and Tasbīḥ (act of remembrance and glorification of Allah) should not abandon it as something useless.

They should, rather, continue with it and keep trying to attain the required degree of attention.

The second method of Dhikr has been given within this verse by saying: وَدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ (and without speaking loudly). It means that it has to be in a lowered voice as compared to a raised voice. In other words, the person who is engaged in the Dhikr of Allah does have the option of doing a voiced Dhikr but its etiquette demands that one should not do it too loudly reaching the outer limits of shouting and screaming. Doing it in an average voice with due regard for the reverence-worthy nature of the activity is better. The fact is that doing the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān very loudly is a sign of disrespect one has in his heart for the addressee. Is it not that one cannot naturally speak up in a loud voice before someone he revers by heart? Therefore, when the usual Dhikr of Allah or the recitation of the Qur'ān is made vocally, one has to be careful not to let the voice be raised any more than necessary.

To sum up, three methods of the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān come out of this verse. (1) Concentrate on the Dhikr of the heart only, that is, consider it sufficient to imagine and deliberate on the meanings of the Qur'ān, and Dhikr, while keeping the tongue totally unmoved. (2) Also move the tongue along with the Dhikr of the heart, without raising the voice to the level of being heard by others. Both these methods are included under the Divine command of: وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ (And remember your Lord in your self). (3) The third method of Dhikr is that, alongwith attention by heart, there is a movement of tongue with voice, but it should not be raised any higher than necessary, in fact, it should be limited to the average level. This method has been proposed in the Qur'ānic statement: وَدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ (and without speaking loudly). Another verse of the Qur'ān has explained it further by saying: وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا It commands the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should not recite the Qur'ān in a voice rising too high nor in a voice lowered too much. Instead, he should maintain a middle level between the two – [17:110].

This was the instruction given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين about the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh.

According to an authentic Ḥadīth, once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out of the house late at night. When he reached the house of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, he saw him busy with Ṣalāh but he was reciting in a lowered voice. Then he reached the house of Sayyidnā 'Umar, رضی اللہ عنہ and saw that he was reciting in a raised voice. When these two companions came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the morning, he said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, 'when I went to you last night, I noticed that you were reciting in a lowered voice.' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr submitted, *'yā rasūlallāh*, the One I was reciting for has heard it. That is sufficient.' Similarly, he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'you were reciting in a raised voice.' He submitted, 'By raising my voice in the recitation, I intended to drive away sleep and Shaiṭān both.' Giving his verdict, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم instructed Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ to raise his voice a little bit and asked Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ to somewhat lower it. (Abū Dāwūd)

According to a report in Tirmidhī, some Companions asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا about the recitation of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whether he did it in a raised voice or a lowered voice. She said, 'at times he would do it loudly and at others, in a lowered voice. He recited both ways.'

Some early elders have favored reciting loudly during *nafl* Ṣalāh at night and in recitations outside the Ṣalāh, while some others have preferred reciting softly in a lowered voice. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said that the person reciting has the choice of reciting either way. However, it is unanimously agreed that reciting loudly has some conditions to it. Firstly, there should be no apprehension of showing off in doing so. Secondly, the voice of the person reciting should not cause any inconvenience or pain to others. For example, it should not interfere in the Ṣalāh or recitation being made by others, or in their work, or rest. Under such eventualities, reciting in a low voice is more meritorious as unanimously held by all.

Then, the rule that applies to the recitation of the Qur'ān also applies to other Adhkār and Tasbīḥāt in that these could be made in a voice loud or low. It is permissible to do it either way – subject to the condition that the voice should not be so loud as to be against the norms of humbleness of heart and the formal etiquette of spiritual

devotion. In addition to that, the voice of the person so engaged in remembering Allah and glorifying Him should cause no disruption in the activities of people working or resting.

As to what is more meritorious – loud or low – it depends on who is doing it and under what conditions. The verdict differs. For some, loud is better, for others, low. Then, there are times when loud is better and there are other times when keeping it low or voiceless is beneficial. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, Rūḥ al-Bayān etc.)

The second rule of etiquette mentioned in the verse under discussion requires that Tilāwah and Dhikr should be made humbly which is the outcome of one's realization that Allah Ta'ālā is great and most exalted and that one keeps the meaning and sense of what he or she is saying in sight.

The third rule of etiquette comes out from the word: خِيفَةً (*khīfah*: fear) in this very verse (205). Here, we have been told that one should be in a state of awe and fear while reciting or making Dhikr. As for fear, it means the fear of not being able to do justice to the great task of worshipping Allah and recognizing His greatness – perhaps, we may fall short or do something contrary to His reverence due on us. In addition to that, we have to be actively conscious of our sins and be fearful of His punishment, fearful of what would happen to us in the end for we do not know what and how it will be. So then, Dhikr and Tilāwah have to be done in the manner of a person who has been subdued by an aura of awe and fear.

These rules have also appeared in an earlier verse of this very Sūrah al-A'rāf where they relate to prayer: اُدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً (Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly – 7:55). Here, instead of خِيفَةً (*khīfah*: fear), the word: خُفْيَةً (*khufyah*: secretly) has been used which means saying it softly in a low voice – as though, it is also a rule of etiquette that Dhikr and Tilāwah should be done softly in a lowered voice. But, this verse makes it clear at the same time that doing voiced Dhikr is not prohibited, however, it is subject to the condition that one does not raise his voice more than necessary, definitely not so high as would cause the state of fear and humbleness to disappear.

Given towards the end of the verse are the timings of Dhikr and

Tilāwah – that it should be done in the mornings and evenings. It could also mean that one should be busy with the remembrance of Allah at least twice a day in the morning and the evening. And it is also possible that by saying mornings and evenings, the reference is to all timings of the day and night on the analogy of saying East and West and thereby meaning the whole world. If so, the verse would mean that one must remain committed to Dhikr and Tilāwah always, under all conditions. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was devoted to the remembrance of Allah at all times and under all conditions.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ (and do not be among the heedless) which means that abandoning the remembrance of Allah and joining the heedless is a great loss.

The last verse (206) depicts the particular state and style of those close to Allah so that others may learn their lesson from it. It is said that those who are close to Allah Ta'ālā show no arrogance against worshipping Him. Being 'with' Allah Ta'ālā means being among those approved of and accepted by Him. This includes all angels and all blessed prophets and the most righteous men and women of the Muslim community. As for the sense of arrogance in this context, it means that they do not assume airs and do not fall short in their acts of worship on the false assumption of being big and special. Instead of doing anything of that sort, they take themselves to be weak and needy before Allah and keep devoting themselves to His remembrance, worship and glorification showing their ultimate humility by prostrating before their Lord in *sajdah*.

From here, we also learn that people who are blessed with the ability to engage in perpetual worship and remembrance of Allah are blessed with the sign that they are 'with' Allah all the time and fortunate to have His company.

Sajdah: Some merits and rules

Sajdah (prostration) as a unit of the Islamic 'Ibādah of Ṣalāh has been mentioned here exclusively since it occupies a distinct place among the rest of the units of Ṣalāh.

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that a person asked Sayyidnā Thawbān

رضی اللہ عنہ, 'tell me about something I should do that will take me to Paradise.' Sayyidnā Thawbān رضی اللہ عنہ remained silent. He repeated the question. He still remained silent. When he came up with the question the third time, he said, 'I had asked the same question from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and he had ordered me to make *sajdah* repeatedly because for every *sajdah* you do, Allah Ta'ālā increases a rank and forgives a sin.' This person says that following his meeting with Sayyidnā Thawbān رضی اللہ عنہ, he met Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ. He put the same question to him and he was given the same answer.

Again in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, but on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'a servant of Allah is closest to his Lord when in *sajdah*. Therefore, when you are in a state of *sajdah*, pray most ardently, for it is strongly hoped that it will be answered.' [1]

Let us bear in mind that Sajdah, by itself, is not a recognized act of 'Ibādah. Therefore, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, prostrating in Sajdah abundantly means that one should offer *nafl* Ṣalāh abundantly. An increased number of *nafl* Ṣalāh would naturally result in an increased number of Sajdahs.

But, if a person were to go in Sajdah alone and supplicate after that, it really does not matter. As for the instruction to supplicate in Sajdah, it is particular to Nafl Salats. It is not mandatory.

Sūrah al-A'rāf ends here. Its last verse is an *Āyah* of Sajdah (requiring the person reciting and the person listening to prostrate in Sajdah). According to a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'when a son of Ādam recites a verse of Sajdah and then prostrates in Sajdah, the Shaiṭān runs crying. He says: Alas, man was asked to prostrate in

1. It should be borne in mind that supplication in *sajdah* should be in *nafl salah* and using the Arabic prayers either mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, in a *sajdah* meant for supplication only, one can pray in whatever language he wishes (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Sajdah and when he obeyed, Paradise became his home, and I was asked to prostrate in Sajdah and when I disobeyed, Hell became my home.'

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on Sūrah al-A‘rāf

Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Anfāl

[The Spoils]

Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed in Madīnah and it has 75 Verses and 10 Sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Verse 1

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَنْفَالِ ؕ قُلِ الْاَنْفَالُ لِلّٰهِ وَ الرَّسُوْلِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ ۪ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗۤ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱﴾

They ask you about the spoils. Say, "The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger." So, fear Allah, and set your relations right, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers. [1]

Thematic Contents of the Sūrah

Sūrah Al-Anfāl now opening here is a Madanī Sūrah. Sūrah Al-A'rāf which appeared previous to it carried a description of the ignorance and hostility from the Mushrikīn and the disbelief and mischief from the people of the Book, as well as a discussion of the subjects related to these.

In this Sūrah, most of the subjects are connected with the battle of Badr which was the occasion when these very people met their sad end in defeat and Muslims succeeded in scoring a victory against them. This was Divine favour and blessing for Muslims and a punishment and retribution for disbelievers.

Since the main reason behind this blessing and reward for Muslims is their absolute sincerity, Godliness and unity - and this sincerity and unity is a result of their total obedience to Allah and His Messenger - therefore, it is at the very beginning of the Sūrah that stress has been laid on righteous conduct rooted in the fear of Allah (*Taqwā*) and on obedience due to Him and His Messenger - and on the need to remember Allah and to trust in Him (*Dhikr* of Allah and *Tawakkul* mentioned in verse 2).

Commentary

This verse is related to an event which came to pass in the battle of Badr. If this event is kept in sight before going to the detailed explanation of the verse, it will make it easy to understand.

What happened is that Muslims, when they won in the battle of Badr - the first confrontation of Kufr and Islam - they had some war spoils on their hands. Its distribution led to a state of affairs among the noble Companions which did not befit the high standard of sincerity and unity around which the whole life of these blessed souls was moulded. Therefore, it was within the very first verse, that the standing policy on this subject was settled for ever - so that, there remains nothing in the hearts of this group of people blessed with sanctity, except truth, sincerity, unity and sacrifice.

Details of this event have been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Mustadrak of Ḥākim and elsewhere in the words of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah رضی اللہ عنہ who was a participant in the battle of Badr. According to the report, someone asked Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit about the meaning of the word: *al-anfāl* in the verse cited above. He said, 'This verse has, of course, been revealed about us, that is, about participants in the battle of Badr. This was in the background of some difference of opinion which arose among us as to the distribution of war spoils and which affected our moral conduct adversely. Then, through this verse, Allah Ta'ālā took away the spoils from our hands and entrusted them with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who distributed them equally over all those who had participated in the Jihād of Badr.

The situation at the battle of Badr was that all of us marched out with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. It was after a tough fight between

the two groups that Allah Ta'ālā had the enemy defeated. At this point, our forces were split in three sub-groups. Some pursued the enemy so that they would not come back. Some went on to collect spoils left by the disbelievers, while some others formed a cordon around the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and kept guarding him against any surprise attack by the enemy in ambush somewhere. When fighting was over, the night came and everyone returned to home base, those who had collected spoils said: We have collected this booty, therefore, no one but us has a share in it. And those who had pursued the enemy said: You do not deserve it more than us because we were the ones who forced the enemy to retreat and run and which gave you the opportunity to collect spoils in peace . And those who remained standing around the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to protect him said: If we wanted to, we too could have joined you in collecting the spoils with you, but we devoted ourself to the task of seeing that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remains protected, so, we too are deserving of it.

This conversation among the Companions ultimately reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whereupon this verse cited above was revealed. It made it very clear that the spoils belonged to Allah. There was none to own it or stake a claim over it, except the one to whom the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would give it. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he distributed the spoils equally over all participants of the Jihād as ordained Divinely. (Ibn Kathīr) Everyone was pleased with this decree of Allah and His Messenger - and naturally ashamed of the unbecoming state of affairs which arose between them because of their mutual approach to remain ahead of the others.

Also in the Musnad of Aḥmad, reported there is another event which spells out the background in which this verse was revealed. It has been narrated by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضى الله عنه. He says: 'My brother, 'Umayr fell a martyr in the battle of Badr. Out of the disbelievers who were arrayed against him, I killed Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ. I took his sword and presented myself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I wished that this sword be given to me. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered me to deposit it with the spoils. I was duty-bound to obey his order, but my heart ached with the thought that my brother laid down his life in this Jihād and I killed the enemy confronting him

and took possession of his sword, yet that too was taken away from me. However, despite this thought, I stepped forward to carry out the Commander's command and deposit the sword with the spoils. But, I had hardly gone far enough when this verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who called me back and let me have this sword.' According to some other narrations, it is also reported that Sayyidnā Sa'd رضى الله عنه had himself requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the particular sword be given to him, but he had said: 'This is not my property which I could give to someone, nor is this owned by you. Deposit it with the rest of the spoils. This matter will be decided in accordance with what Allah decrees.' (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

It is not unlikely that both these events may have come to pass and the verse may have been revealed in answer to both.

A detailed explanation of the verse:

Here, the word: انفال (*al-anfāl*) is the plural of نفل *nafl* which means grace and reward. *Nafl* Ṣalāh, Ṣawm and Ṣadaqah are called *Nafl* because they are not compulsory or obligatory on anyone. Those who do these do so out of their free will. In the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah, the words *nafl* and *anfāl* are also used for spoils or booty obtained from the disbelievers at the time of Jihād. But, the Qur'ān has used three words to carry this sense, that is, انفال : *anfāl*, غنيمة: *ghanīmah* and فيئ: *fai'*. The word: *anfāl* appears right here in the present verse. As for the word: *ghanīmah*, its details will appear in verse 41 of this very Sūrah. Then, details relating to the word: فيئ: *fai'* find mention in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr: وَمَآ أَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ (and what Allah made His Messenger get - 59:6). The meanings of these three words differ with slight variation. Since the difference between them is slight, there are occasions when one word is used for the other to mean spoils in the absolute sense. *Ghanīmah* generally carries the sense of booty obtained from the adversary through fighting in Jihād. *Fai'*: فيئ is booty obtained from the disbelievers without active fighting and killing, whether they abandon it or agree to give it up voluntarily. Then, *nafl* and *anfāl* are also used to refer to the reward which the Supreme Commander of Jihād may bestow upon a particular Mujāhid in return for his exemplary performance. This meaning has been reported from Sayyidnā

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ as in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr. (Ibn Kathīr) Then, there are occasions when spoils as such are also identified through the terms of *nafl* and *anfāl*. In this verse, most commentators have gone by this very general meaning. The same general meaning has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī. The truth of the matter is that this word is used to carry both meanings, the general and the particular. Therefore, no difference exists here. And the best explanation in this connection has been given by Imām Abū 'Ubayd in his Kitāb al-Amwāl. He says: Lexically, *nafl* means grace, reward or gift - and it is a very special blessing of Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon the Muslim Ummah, the most fortunate recepients of His mercy - in that the properties obtained from disbelievers through fighting in Jihād were made lawful for Muslims. Otherwise, the practice did not exist among past communities. In fact, the law which governed spoils was that such property was not lawful for anyone. All spoils were collected and deposited at one place, then, a fire or lightening would come from the heavens and burn it up. This was supposed to be a sign indicating that the God-oriented fighting was acceptable in His sight. If spoils so collected and deposited were not burnt up by the lightening from the heaven, it was supposed to be a sign that the effort was not acceptable. Therefore, the later spoils were considered rejected and ill-omened because of which it was not used by anyone.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said: I have been blessed with five things which were not given to any prophet or his community before me. One of the five is: احلت لی الغنائم ولم تحل لاحد قبلی that is, 'made lawful for me are the spoils, though they were not lawful for anyone before me.'

The injunction of *'anfāl'* given in the cited verse is: "The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger." What it means is that its real ownership is that of Allah while the right of their disposal rests with the Messenger of Allah who distributes these in accordance with the command of Allah at his discretion.

Therefore, a group of leading authorities in Tafsīr, with Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, Mujāhid, 'Ikrimah, Suddiyy and some

others among them, have said that this injunction was operative during the early period of Islam when the law of the distribution of spoils which is going to appear in the fifth section of this very verse was yet to be revealed - because there spoils as a whole have been left at the discretion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who was to dispose them off as he wished. The detailed injunctions which appear later enjoin that one-fifth of the entire spoils should be deposited in the Bayt al-Māl (Treasury of the Muslim State) to cover the needs of common Muslims, and the remaining four-fifth should be distributed among Jihād participants under a particular law the details of which appear in authentic Aḥādīth. This detailed statement abrogated the first verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl - and some respected elders have stated that there is no case of abrogation at this place. Instead, the difference here is that of brevity and detail. The first verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl is brief with its details appearing in verse 41. However, *Fai'* property the injunctions about which have been taken up in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr (59) has been placed totally at the disposal of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who may act as he wishes at his discretion. Therefore,when describing the injunctions at that place, it has also been said: وَمَآ اٰتٰكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ وَمَا نَهٰكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا (that is, 'and what the Messenger gives you take it, and what he stops you from leave it - 59:7).

These details tell us that 'spoils' refers to properties which are obtained through Jihād confrontation, and *Fai'* properties are what is obtained without fighting and killing in Jihād. As for the word: *al-Anfāl*, it is used for both, whether the sense be general or particular, and it is also used for the reward which is bestowed by the Commander-in-Chief of Jihād on a *Ghāzī* (living Muslim warrior of a victorious Jihād force).

In this connection, there are four forms of giving awards to Ghāzies in Jihād which date back to the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

1. That it is proclaimed that whoever kills an adversary will become the owner of properties obtained from the soldier killed by him. This property will just not be deposited with the rest of the spoils.

2. That a group is taken out from the larger army and is sent on Jihād to a particularly targeted area with the orders that the spoils

obtained from that area will belong to the particular group sent there - subject to the obligation that one-fifth of the property thus obtained will be deposited in *Bayt al-Mal* (Treasury of the Muslim State) to be used to cover the needs of common Muslims.

3. That a particular Ghazi is given something out of the one-fifth of spoils deposited in the *Bayt al-Mal* in return for his distinct achievement by the Amir of Jihad under his discretion.

4. That a certain portion from the entire spoils is set aside to be given as reward to the serving cadre of the Jihad force, such as those who attend to the horses of Mujahidin and help them with their chores. (Ibn Kathir)

The substance of the verse is: Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Allah Ta'ala has said: People ask you about the spoils. You tell them that the spoils are for Allah and the Messenger, that is, no one holds a claim on them, or is their owner. Whatever the Messenger of Allah decides under the command of Allah Ta'ala shall be the operative law.

Unity among People is Based on *Taqwa*

In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَأَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَأَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗۤ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (So, fear Allah, and set your relations right, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers). This is addressed to the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The reference is to what happened at the battle of Badr when the noble Companions had differed among themselves about the distribution of spoils and which posed the danger that their mutual relations may become strained. Through this verse, Allah Ta'ala has Himself settled the matter of the distribution of spoils. Now, they are to retrain their hearts for the better and set their relations right. The core of the method proposed is Taqwa, the fear of Allah, the sense of being responsible before Him.

Experience bears out that under the active influence of a heart filled with the fear of Allah and 'Akhirah, major disputes get resolved in no time and deep-rooted hatreds evaporate in thin air.

Therefore, after proposing the method of Taqwa in this verse, it was said: أَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ that is, 'set your relations right' through Taqwa.

After that, it was further explained by saying: إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers) that is, the obedience to Allah and the Messenger should be total and perfect, if you are believers. In other words, *'Īmān* (faith) demands *Iṭā'ah* (obedience) and *Iṭā'ah* (obedience) is the outcome of *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah). When people become the practitioners of these virtues, their mutual disputes shall stand resolved automatically and hearts shall be filled with love rather than hostility.

Verses 2-4

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ
يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
حَقًّا ۚ لَّهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

Certainly, the believers are those whose hearts are filled with fear when (the name of) Allah is mentioned; and when His verses are recited before them, they increase them in faith and in their Lord they place their trust. [2] **(They are) those who establish Ṣalāh, and give away from what We have given them.** [3] **Those are the believers in reality. For them there are high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness, and dignified provision.** [4]

Commentary

Particular Attributes of the Believer

Described in the verses cited above are particular attributes which should be the hallmark of every believer. The hint given here is that every believer should keep checking on his or her physical and spiritual condition and assess if these attributes are present in his or her person. If they are, this calls for being grateful to Allah that He blessed His servant with the attributes of true believers. And should it be that none of these attributes is present there, or is weak or feeble despite being present, then, one must either start being concerned about acquiring them or making them stronger than what they are.

The First Attribute : The Fear of Allah

The first attribute described here is: الَّذِيْنَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (those whose hearts are filled with fear when {the name of} Allah is mentioned -2). It means that their hearts are soaked in and brimming with the realization of Allah's greatness and their love for Him. This state of the heart demands that there be an attending aura of awe and fear around it. This has been mentioned in another verse of the Qur'ān as a state which deserves glad tidings for all people of love: وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (that is, give glad tidings to those humble and soft people whose hearts are filled with fear when (the name of) Allah is mentioned - Al-Hajj, 22:34). In both these verses, identified there is a very special pre-requisite of the mention, thought and remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*) which is awe and fear. Then, in yet another verse, also enumerated there is a particular property of *Dhikrullah*, that is: أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ (Listen! Hearts find peace through the remembrance of Allah - Al-Ra'd, 13:28).

This tells us that the fear and awe mentioned in this verse are not contrary to the peace and tranquility of the heart. For instance, the fear of a beast or enemy disturbs one's peace of heart. But, the fear which is generated in the heart as a result of the Dhikr of Allah is totally different from that. Therefore, the word used here is not the exact counterpart of 'fear.' It has been called: وجل (*wajal*) which does not mean fear (*khawf*) in the absolute sense. Instead, it is the awe, a respectful feeling of fear which emerges in the heart because of the majesty of the most exalted. Some commentators have said that, at this place, the mention and remembrance of Allah means that a person was intending to commit some sin, but when he happened to think of Allah, it made him scared of His punishment as a result of which he turned away from that sin - under this situation, such a fear would mean nothing but the fear of punishment. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The Second Attribute : Increase in 'Īmān

The second attribute of the believer has been identified by saying: 'and when His verses are recited before him, they increase them in faith.' What is the meaning of increase in faith? A meaning upon which all scholars, commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree is that 'Īmān or faith does increase in strength, quality and light. It is also

confirmed by experiment and observation that good deeds give strength and stability to the state of one's faith. The heart is so laid open to the acceptance of truth that good deeds become one's natural habit; if he leaves them, he feels the pinch; and he develops in himself a natural distaste for sin to the limit that he does not go even near them. This is the great station of 'Īmān, of faith which has been identified in Ḥadīth by the term: The sweetness of 'Īmān:

واذاحلت الحلاوة قلبا نشطت فى العبادة الاعضاء

When the sweetness of 'Īmān settles down in someone's heart
All parts of his body start relishing its taste in acts of worship!

In short, the verse puts the second attribute of a perfect believer as: 'When the "*Āyāt* of Allah Ta'ālā are recited' - his faith should become more pronounced in polish and progress, as well as in the desire to do good deeds. This also helps us realize that the way Muslims at large recite and listen to the Qur'ān - paying no heed to the due etiquette and reverence of the Qur'ān nor having any idea of the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā - produces a recitation which is not what is desired, and certainly not what could be expected to generate the best of results, even if that too may not be devoid of *thawāb* (reward).

The Third Attribute : Trust in Allah

The third attribute of a believer identified here is that he or she should place their trust in Allah. The Arabic word: *Tawakkul* means trust. The sense is that the believer should have total trust in Allah, One and Pure, free of all conceivable associations and ascriptions, not simply theoretically, but in deeds too, and in all states and conditions of one's life as well. In a sound Hadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: This does not mean that one should abandon material causes and means when it comes to taking care of one's legitimate needs. The point is that one should not consider material means and instruments as sufficient for real success, instead of which, one should do his best, subject to his ability and courage, to assemble and utilize necessary material means. It is only after that one should entrust his matter with Allah Ta'ālā believing that He is the One who has created all means and He is certainly the One who makes means to bear fruits. What would come to be has to be what He wills. In another Ḥadīth, he said: اجملوا فى الطلب وتوكلوا عليه It means: Make a moderate effort to procure

what you need through material means, and then place your trust in Him. In other words, do not let your heart and mind get bogged down with nothing but material ways and means.

The Fourth Attribute : Establishment of Ṣalāh

The fourth attribute of the believers has been described as: '(They are) those who establish Ṣalāh.' At this point, it is worth keeping in mind that the text is not talking about making, saying, offering or performing Ṣalāh, instead, what has been mentioned here is *Iqāmah* of Ṣalāh. Literally, Iqāmah means 'to make something stand straight.' The sense of Iqāmah (translated as 'establish' in absence of a precise equivalent) is that one should carry out the obligation of Ṣalāh with the fullest consideration for its etiquette and relevant conditions, exactly as explained and demonstrated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed. If there is any shortcoming in observing the etiquette, and conditions, you may call it the saying or making of Ṣalāh, but you cannot call it the Iqāmah or establishment of Ṣalāh. As for the benefits, effects and blessings of Ṣalāh mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (of course, Ṣalāh stops from immodesty and sinfulness - Al-'Ankabūt, 29:45) those too depend on nothing but the proper establishment (*Iqāmah*) of Ṣalāh as due. When the etiquette of Ṣalāh has not been observed as due, the Ṣalāh would though be counted as permissible as far as *Fatwā* or juristic ruling is concerned, but the blessings of Ṣalāh will be reduced to the measure of shortcoming in observing it - and in some situations one may be totally deprived of these blessings.

The Fifth Attribute: Spending in the Way of Allah

The fifth attribute of a believer, as stated in the verse, is that they spend in the way of Allah out of what Allah has provided them with. This 'spending in the way of Allah' is general. It is inclusive of all charitable spendings (*Ṣadaqāt* and *Khairāt*), endowments (*Waqf*) and gifts and grants to relatives. Also included under this category are Islamic legal obligations such as Zakāh and the Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr, and voluntary charities, donations and contributions (*Nafl Ṣadaqāt* and *Tabarru'āt*) as well as any financial assistance amiably provided to guests, friends and respected elders.

After describing these five virtues of the model believer, it was

said: أُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا (Those are the believers in reality) - that is, they are the same, outwardly and inwardly, they say what is there in their heart, otherwise, there are those who say: اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (I testify that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah) which is only verbal as far as it goes. Their hearts do not throb with belief in the Oneness of Allah, nor do they have the passion for obedience to His prophet. What they do contradicts what they say. There is a hint in the verse which points out that every truth has its reality and unless you get to that reality, you cannot arrive at the truth.

Someone asked the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: 'O Abū Sa'īd, are you a believer?' He said: 'Brother, there are two kinds of 'Īmān (faith). If you are asking whether or not I am a believer in Allah Ta'ālā and His angels, Books and Messengers, and in Paradise and Hell, and in the accounting and retribution of the Last Day, then, my answer is: Of course, I am a believer. And if you are asking whether or not I am the perfect believer mentioned in the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, then, I just do not know whether or not I am one of those. The verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl referred to here are the same verses the discussion of which is before you right now.

After having described the attributes and marks of true believers in the verses cited above, it was said: لَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ (For them there are high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness, and dignified provision).

Promised here are three things: (1) high ranks, (2) forgiveness and (3) dignified provision.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, the attributes of true Muslims mentioned in the previous verses are of three kinds: (1) Those which relate to one's heart, the inward human dimension, such as, belief in Allah, fear of Allah and trust in Allah. (2) Those which relate to physical deeds, such as, Ṣalāh etc., and (3) Those which relate to one's wealth, such as, spending in the way of Allah.

Counter-poised against these three kinds, three rewards have been mentioned. High ranks have been set against inward and spiritual attributes; forgiveness has been placed against deeds which are

related to outward human physique, like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm. Ṣalāh, as in Ḥadīth, becomes the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of sins. Finally, 'dignified provision' has been set against spending in the way of Allah, that is, one would get what is much better and much more than what one has spent in the mortal life.

Verses 5 - 6

كَمَآ اَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْۢ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَاِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لَكٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ فِى الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَاَنَّمَا يُسَاقُوْنَ اِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾

It is like when your Lord made you leave your home for the sake of truth, while a group from the believers were averse to it; [5] **they were disputing with you about the truth after it became clear, as if they were being driven to a death being seen by them.** [6]

Commentary

It has already been stated at the beginning of the Sūrah that most of the subjects taken up in Sūrah Al-Anfāl relate to the retribution and punishment which visited the disbelievers and polytheists, and to the favour shown and reward given to Muslims. Also, described there as a corollary are injunctions which provide for both parties necessary lessons and advices. Out of what had transpired between them, the first and the most important event was that of the battle of Badr in which the polytheists were defeated, suffering heavy losses in men and materials, despite the support of military hardware, numbers and strength at their disposal - and Muslims were blessed with a great victory despite their overall lack of men and materials. Beginning from the verse cited above, there appears in this Sūrah a detailed description of the battle of Badr.

The Battle of Badr : A Detailed Description

The first verse mentions that some Muslims did not like to take the risk of initiating and advancing for Jihād on the occasion of Badr. But, when Allah Ta'ālā commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to initiate the Jihād through His special decree, those who had disliked the idea came along with him. The phraseology of the Qur'ān

employed to state this situation is worth consideration from many angles.

First of all, the verse begins with: كَمَآ أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ (It is like when your Lord made you leave ...). Here the word: كَمَا (*kamā*) is a word used for comparison. Now, the point is what is being compared here, and with what? Commentators have given various interpretations possible here. Abū Ḥayyān has reported fifteen such statements. Out of these, three are more likely as probable:

1. The simile aims to state that the way the Companions had encountered some mutual difference at the time of the distribution of spoils obtained from the battle of Badr, then, they all obeyed the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم under Divine decree, and its blessings and good results became manifest before them - similarly, at the beginning of this Jihād, there was an expression of dislike from some people, then, it was under Divine decree that everyone obeyed and the beneficial outcome and superb rewards it brought in its wake were witnessed by everyone openly. This interpretation is credited to Farra' and al-Mubarrad (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ). Maulānā Ashraf A'lī Thānavī has preferred the same view in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān.

2. The second probable interpretation is that a promise of 'high ranks, forgiveness and dignified provision' in the Hereafter was made for true believers in previous verses (4). In these verses, the fact of this promise being certain was described in a manner which pointed out that - though the promise due to be fulfilled in the Hereafter is not yet openly visible for eyes to see, but the promise of Divine help and victory does stand fulfilled in the case of the battle of Badr all too manifestly. So, take your lesson from here and be certain that the way this promise has been fulfilled right here in this mortal world, so it shall be with the promise of the Hereafter - that too shall come to be definitely fulfilled. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī with reference to Al-Naḥḥās)

3. The third probability is what Abū Ḥayyān states after having reported fifteen interpretative positions taken by commentators. He says: I was not comfortable with any of these positions. One night, pondering over this verse, I went to sleep. Then, I saw in a dream that I am going somewhere and there is a person with me. I am discussing this verse with him and I am telling him that I have never faced a

difficulty similar to what I have faced in the case of the words of this verse. It seems that there is an elision of some word here. Then, all of a sudden, right there within the dream sequence, it transpired into my heart that the elision here is that of the word: نَصَرَكَ (*naṣaraka* : He helped you). This I liked and so did the other person I was talking to in the dream. When I woke up, I thought about it. My difficulty was all gone since, in this situation, the word:'*kamā*' has not been used for comparison, instead, it has been used for the statement of cause. Thus, the verse comes to mean that the cause of the very special help and support given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by Almighty Allah on the occasion of the battle of Badr was that he did what he did in this Jihād, not by some wish or discretion of his own, but by remaining obedient to the Divine Command exclusively. It was under His Command that he left his home and what happened thereafter should have happened precisely as it did - and it always does - that Divine support accompanies such a person.

Nevertheless, in this sentence of the verse, all these three meanings are probable and sound. Next, let us consider why the Holy Qur'ān has elected not to mention that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out for this Jihād on his own. Instead of that, the text states: 'your Lord made you leave.' Embedded here is a hint towards the perfect servitude and obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It signifies that his act is, in reality, the act of God which issues forth from the parts of his body - as it appears in an Ḥadīth al-Qudsī wherein the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: When a servant of Allah is blessed with nearness to Allah through obedience and servitude, Allah says about him (or her): 'I become his eye. What he sees, he sees through Me. I become his ears. What he hears, he hears through Me. I become his hands and feet. Whomsoever he grips, he overpowers through Me and towards whomsoever he walks, he walks through Me.' The essential outcome is that a very special help and support from the most exalted Allah accompanies him all along. It means that the acts which obviously seem to issue forth from his eyes and ears or hands and feet are, in reality, the workings of the power of Allah.

To sum up, it is by the use of the word: أَخْرَجَكَ (*akhrajaka* : made you

leave), a clear indication has been given that the act of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in coming out for Jihād was really the act of God which made him leave, though manifested through his deed.

Also worth noticing here is that the text chooses to say: اَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ (your Lord made you leave) which mentions Allah Almighty with His attribute of being the *Rabb*, the Nurturer and Sustainer of all. This points out to the fact that the act of making him leave for this Jihād was undertaken as required by the majesty of the Supreme Nurturer and Sustainer and in the interest of teaching and training His prophet and the Muslim community through him. The reason is that, through this arrangement, the oppressed and subdued Muslims were to be made victorious and the arrogant and unjust disbelievers were to be subjected to their first taste of punishment.

The next phrase: مِنْ بَيْتِكَ means 'from your home.' The sense of the sentence is: 'Your Lord made you leave your home.' According to the majority of commentators, this 'home' means the home in Madinah, or the fair city of Madinah itself where he came to live after Hijrah - for the event of Badr took place during the second year of Hijrah. Then, by adding the expression: بِالْحَقِّ (*bil-ḥaqq*) translated as: 'for the sake of truth,' it has been made very clear that the entire action has been initiated to see that truth prevails and the false stands frustrated. Thus, also established here is that this action has not been triggered because of hunger of land or anger of monarch, as customary with other states.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: وَاِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لَكٰرِهُوْنَ (while a group from the believers were averse to it). The sense is that a group from among the Muslims took the idea of this Jihād to be burdensome and unpleasant. How and why the noble Companions came accross this unpleasant situation is something which needs to be understood. In fact, not only to understand the present statement but to fully understand verses which will soon follow, it is appropriate to first find out the initial circumstances and causes of the battle of Badr. So, let us first go to what happened at the battle of Badr.

According to the report of the event as narrated by Ibn 'Uqbah and Ibn 'Amīr, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم heard the news in Madīnah that Abū Sufyān was on his way to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah with a

trading caravan carrying merchandise from Syria and that all Quraysh tribes of Makkah were partners in this business venture. According to the statement of Ibn 'Uqbah, there was no Quraysh man or woman in Makkah who did not hold a share in this venture. If someone had even one *mithqal* (approximately 4.50 gr.) of gold, he or she had still taken a share in it. As for the total invested capital of this trade caravan, it was fifty thousand *dīnārs* - as reported by Ibn 'Uqbah. Dīnār is a gold coin which weighs approximately 4.50 grams. According to current (1970) market rates for gold, it is equal to Rupees fifty two and the value of the total capital of the caravan comes to Rupees twenty six *lakhs* Let us bear in mind that these rupees are not what we know them to be now. Instead, they are twenty six *lakhs*[1] which belong to a period 1400 years behind us - which, it goes without saying, had value and strength of its own, much higher than twenty six *crores* [2] of our time. It is interesting to note that seventy strong youngmen and their chiefs accompanied this trade caravan to manage the security and business concerns of the enterprise. This tells us that this trade caravan was, in real terms, a trading corporation of the Quraysh of Makkah.

On the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ and others, Al-Baghawī reports that there were forty Quraysh chiefs among the mounted force accompanying the caravan, with 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and Mukhramah ibn Nawfal being noteworthy among them. Then, it is also established that the strongest base of power the Quraysh had was no other but this very trading activity and the financial support of the capital which backed it. In fact, this was their seemingly innocent weapon with which they had harassed and compelled the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to leave Makkah. In this background, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came to know about the return of this trading caravan after their visit to Syria, it occured to him that this was the time to confront the caravan and break the main source of strength the Quraysh had. He consulted his Companions. But, these were the days of Ramaḍān. They had made no battle plans in advance. So, some of them supported the idea readily and courageously, but some others were a little hesitant. Under this situation, he too did not make partic-

1. $ 48,148

2. $ 4,81,481

ipation in this Jihād compulsory for all. Instead, he ordered that those who have a ride should go with him. At that time, there were many people who stayed behind unable to go on Jihād. As for those who wanted to go, their rides were in the adjoining villages. They sought permission to go and bring their rides before they could go with him. But, there was not much time to wait. Therefore, the order given was that only those who have their rides with them and do wish to go on Jihād should get ready to go. There was no time left to summon rides from outside. Therefore, only a few participants who were ready to go could be assembled together. As for those who did not intend to go from the very outset, that too was caused by the absence of a general call for Jihād. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had not made participation in this Jihād obligatory on everyone. Then, people thought that they were to handle a trade caravan, not an army which could need a matching force of fighters. Therefore, a fairly large number of the Companions did not take part in this Jihād.

After reaching Bi'r Suqya, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered Qays ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah رضى الله عنه to count the number of *mujahidīn* with him. He counted and told him that they were three hundred and thirteen. Hearing that, he was delighted. He said, 'This is the number of the companions of Ṭālūt.[1] Therefore, this is a good omen, that of victory.' The noble Companions had a total of seventy camels with them. There was one camel for every three of them. They would ride turn by turn. This applied to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as well. Besides him, there were two other riding partners in the one camel alloted to them. They were Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه. When came his turn to walk, they would submit: 'You ride. We shall do the walking for you.' The reply he gave was - as it would be from the one created to be mercy for all creation: 'Neither are you stronger than me, nor am I needfree of the reward of the Hereafter that I let you have the chance of earning a little *thawāb* for myself!' Therefore, when it was his turn to walk, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too used to walk.

On the other hand, someone reached as far as 'Ain al-Zarqā', a well-known place in Syria and passed on information to Abū Sufyān,

1. An Israeli King (Saul). See for details v.1, p. 627, 628

the leader of the trade caravan, that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is waiting for the caravan and will definitely come after them. Abū Sufyān made necessary precautionary arrangements to meet the threat. When this caravan entered Ḥijāz, he picked up an intelligent and effecient agent known as Ḍamḍam (ضمضم) ibn 'Umar, gave him 20 *mithqāl* of gold (about 90 grams) as his wages, and made him agree to rush to Makkah on a speedy camel, and tell them about the danger the caravan apprehended from the companions of the Prophet of Islam.

To proclaim the danger, Ḍamḍam ibn 'Umar followed the particular custom of that time, cut off the ears and the nose of his she-camel, tore off his shirt from the front and the back and placed the camel-litter or seat upside down on the back of the camel. These signs served as danger bells during those days. When he entered Makkah in that style, the entire city was electrified. Everyone from the Quraysh was ready to put up a defence. Those who could go out to fight went out personally and those who were unable to do so for some reason, they arranged for someone to go and fight in their behalf. Thus, it was within three days that they had an armed force with necessary support ready to march.

When they noticed someone hesitating from participating in this battle, they suspected them, taking them to be pro-Muslim. Therefore, they particularly forced such people to come out and fight. There were others who professed Islam openly but were unable to migrate due to their personal compulsions. Having no choice, they had just stayed out in Makkah. These people too - as well as anyone from the family of Banū Hāshim about whom it was suspected that he had his sympathies with Muslims - they were all cornered and goaded to come out for this fight. Right there among these helpless people, there was Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, and the two sons of Abū Ṭālib namely Ṭālib and 'Aqīl also.

Thus, this Makkan army which had one thousand armed men, two hundred horses, six hundred coats of mail, female war-song chanters and their drums marched out to Badr. On every stage of their journey, ten camels were slaughtered to feed them.

On the other side, it was on Saturday, the 12th of Ramaḍān that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم moved out of Madinah with prepara-

tions good enough to confront a trade caravan. After covering several stages, when he reached close to Badr, he sent an advance reconnaisance party of two men to gather information about the caravan of Abū Sufyān. (Maẓharī)

The informers came back with the report that Abū Sufyān's caravan being aware of the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in hot pursuit after them had passed by keeping close to the sea shore, and that an army of one thousand men was coming from Makkah to give cover to the caravan and fight the Muslims off. (Ibn Kathīr)

As obvious, this information changed all plans as projected. Given the gravity of the situation, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went into consultation with his Companions to determine whether or not they have to fight against this advancing army. Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣāri رضى الله عنه and some other Companions submitted that they do not have the necessary force to fight against them, nor have they come out there for that purpose. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه rose and pledged his obedience to whatever the Messenger of Allah decided. Then, rose Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه pledging his obedience to him and his readiness for Jihād in the same spirit. Finally, it was Sayyidnā Miqdād رضى الله عنه who stood up and said:

> '*Yā Rasūl Allah*! Go by the command of Allah you have been given and enforce it. We are with you. By Allah, we shall never say to you what was said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by the Banī Isrā'īl: فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (Go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here - 5:24). By the Being that has sent you with the true faith, if you were to take us as far as Bark al-Ghamad in Ethiopia, we shall follow you to fight there.'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was very pleased. He made prayers for them. But, an expression of support was yet to come from the Anṣār which seemed to point out to the probability that the pledge of help and support given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by the Anṣār of Madīnah was limited to and valid within the city of Madīnah, and that they were not bound to extend their support for areas outside Madīnah. Therefore, he addressed the gathering once again asking them to advise him whether or not he should take the initiative in this

Jihād. This address was beamed at the Anṣār. Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh al-Anṣārī رضی اللہ عنہ got the point and asked him: '*Yā Rasūl* Allah! Are you asking us?' He said: 'Yes.' Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh then submitted:

> '*Yā Rasūl Allah*! We have believed in you and we have testified that everything you say is all true, and we have given solemn pledges to you that we shall obey you under all conditions. Therefore, enforce whatever command you have been given by Allah Ta'ālā. By the Being that has sent you with the true faith, if you take us into the sea, we shall go with you into the sea and no one from among us shall lag behind you. It is all right for us if you were to take us as soon as tomorrow and throw us against the enemy. We strongly hope that Allah Ta'ālā will have you witness conditions generated by our deeds, conditions which would become the delight of your eyes. Take us wherever you wish in the name of Allah.'

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was pleased with the response and ordered the group of Mujāhidin to march forward with the name of Allah. And to them he gave the good news that Allah Ta'ālā has promised him that they shall overcome one of the two groups. The two groups mentioned here mean: One, the trade caravān of Abū Sufyān; and the other, this army coming from Makkah. Then, he said: 'By Allah, it is as if I am seeing the killing fields of disbelievers with my own eyes.' (This whole event has been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī)

Explanation of Verses in the Light of the Details of the Event

After having heard the details of the event, let us go back to the verses cited above. That it has been said in the first verse (5): وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ (while a group from the believers was averse to this Jihād) is actually a hint towards the state of mind which some noble Companions were in while being consulted on the advisability of waging Jihād and to which they seemed to be averse or not courageous enough to undertake it.

Then, the same event has been alluded to in the second verse (6): يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنظُرُونَ (they were disputing with you about the truth after it became clear, as if they were being driven to a death being seen by them).

Though the noble Companions had not disobeyed any command given to them - in fact, what they had done was a certain expression of their weakness and lack of courage as part of their response when consulted. But, even such expression of personal opinion coming from the Companions of the Messengers of Allah when juxtaposed with the high station they were blessed with was unwelcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, it was set forth in words which spell out displeasure.

Verses 7 - 10

وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ إِحْدَى الطَّآئِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّوْنَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ
ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُوْنُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ أَنْ يُّحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ
وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَ
لَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ إِذْ تَسْتَغِيْثُوْنَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ
أَنِّيْ مُمِدُّكُمْ بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُرْدِفِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ إِلَّا
بُشْرٰى وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهٖ قُلُوْبُكُمْ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ
إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And when Allah was promising you that one of the two groups was for you, and you were wishing that the unarmed one be for you. And Allah wanted to establish the truth through His words and to cut off the very root of the disbelievers, [7] **so that He proves the truth to be true and falsehood to be false, even to the dislike of the sinners.** [8]

When you were calling your Lord for help, so He responded to you (saying): "I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other." [9]

And Allah has made it (the promise) just to give you a good news, and so that your hearts might be at rest thereby. And the help is from none but Allah. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [10]

Commentary

The verses cited above describe the event of Badr and point out to

blessings which descended upon Muslims in the form of Divine help and support during the Battle.

In the first (7) and the second (8) verses, it has been stated that at the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the noble Companions got the information that a virtual army of the Quraysh has already left Makkah to give a security cover to their trade caravan, Muslims found that they now have two groups to deal with. One of the two was the trade caravan which has been called: عير (*'īr*) in relevant narrations. The other one was this very armed group which had dashed out from Makkah and which has been called: نفير (*nafīr*). According to the statement given in the verse, that was the time when Allah Ta'ālā had made a promise to His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم - and to all Muslims through him - to the effect that they will totally overcome one of the two groups so much so that they would be able to deal with it as they wished.

Now, it is obvious that overcoming a trade caravan was easy and danger-free while dealing with an armed force was fraught with all sorts of difficulties and dangers. Therefore, after hearing this seemingly ambiguous promise, it occured to many Companions, that it would be convenient if the Divine promise, made to Muslims that they would overcome one of the two groups, were to be about the group which was simply an unarmed trading caravan. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and many of his leading Companions intended otherwise as Divinely guided and settled for overcoming an armed force as the better choice.

In this verse, Muslims seeking to overcome an unarmed group have been warned that they, on their part, preferred to overcome an unarmed trading caravan in view of their tilt towards personal convenience and a danger-free option. But, Allah Ta'ālā intended it to be otherwise so that the real objective of Islām stands achieved, that is, truth gets to be established as the ultimate truth and the very root of disbelievers is cut off. It is obvious that this objective could be achieved only when the confrontation is against an armed force and Muslims overwhelm and overpower them.

In substance, what Muslims are being chastised for is their choice of an option which was laced with timidity, desire to relax, and was a

thing of temporal benefit. Contrary to that, the intention made by Allah Ta'ālā was based on high determination, great objectives and benefits which were perfect and eternal. Then, in the second verse (8), it was further clarified by saying that there was nothing outside the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. If He had so willed, Muslims would have truimphed over the trading caravan, but He deemed it compatible with the station and majesty of the Messenger of Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and his noble Companions رضی اللہ عنهم اجمعین that the confrontation should be against the armed force which should result in their conquest, so that it becomes all too clear that truth is, after all, the truth and that falsehood is, after all, nothing but falsehood.

Noteworthy at this point is the question that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Knowing, All-Aware and certainly cognizant of the beginning and the end of everything. What then was the expedient consideration behind this ambiguous promise - that Muslims will overcome any one of the two groups? It seems possible that He could have pinpointed one group precisely and said that such and such group will be overtaken.

The reason for this ambiguity - and Allah knows best - seems to be that this was designed to be a test of the noble Companions to determine whether they opt for the easy, or the difficult. Then, this was part of their moral training as well - through which they were taught a lesson in high determination, in the struggle for great objectives and in how not to be scared of impending dangers.

Described in the third (9) and fourth (10) verses is what happened after Muslims stood combat ready against their armed opponents. When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم saw that he has only three hundred and thirteen Companions by his side - and that too being mostly unarmed - and arrayed against them there was an armed force composed of one thousand strong men, then, he raised his hands of prayer before Allah *Jalla thana'uh* seeking his help and support. As he prayed, the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, said: '*Āmīn*' (Amen : So be it). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has reported the words of this *du'ā* (prayer) made by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم as given below in its translation:

> "O Allah, let the promise You have made to me come true now. O Allah, if this modest group of Muslims were to perish,

> then, on Your earth, there shall remain no one to worship You. (because, the earth is full of *kufr* and *shirk* and left here are these few Muslims who worship Allah as due)."

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم kept busy with his *du'ā*, beseeching earnestly and plaintively so much so that the sheet wrap around his shoulders slided down. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه stepped forward and put the sheet back on his blessed body and said to him: '*Ya Rasūl* Allah, please worry no more. Allah Ta'ālā will surely respond to your prayer and fulfill His promise.'

This is the event referred to in the opening statement: إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ (when you were calling your Lord for help) of verse 9. It means that 'worth remembering is the time when you were calling your Lord and appealing for His help and support.' This appeal for help was though from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in fact but, since all Companions by his side were saying '*Āmīn*' (So be it), therefore, the statement was attributed to the whole group.

Immediately after, there appears the statement which describes how this prayer has been answered. The words are: فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ (so he responded to you [saying]: 'I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other' - 9)

The unmatched power with which Allah Ta'ālā has blessed angels can be gauged from the event which transpired at the time the part of earth on which the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ صلى الله عليه وسلم lived was overturned upside down. This was done by Angel Jibra'īl with just one flick of his feather. So, there was no need to send such a large number of angels to participate in the combat - even one would have been more than enough. But, Allah Ta'ālā knows the nature of His servants as they also get impressed with numbers. Therefore, the promise of sending angels was kept synchronized with the numbers of the adversary in the combat, so that their hearts are put at rest fully and comprehensively.

The fourth verse (10) restates this aspect explicitly by saying: وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ It means: 'Allah has done it only to give you glad tidings and so that your hearts might be at rest thereby.'

The number of angels sent to support Muslims in the battle of

Badr has been given as one thousand at this place, while in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3: 124) the number mentioned is three thousand and five thousand. The reason for this lies in three different promises made under different circumstances. The first promise was that of one thousand angels, the reason for which was the prayer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the supporting plaint of common Muslims with him. The second promise of three thousand angels which appears first in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān was made at a time when Muslims heard about the additional forces coming to join the Quraysh army. It has been reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī as based on a narration of Al-Sha'bī from Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir and others that on the day of the battle of Badr when Muslims heard that Kurz ibn Jābir Muḥāribī was coming with additional armed support for the disbelievers, they were disturbed and agitated. Thereupon, the verse of 'Āl-'Imrān: اَلَنْ يَّكْفِيَكُمْ اَنْ يُّمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلٰثَةِ اٰلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنْزَلِيْنَ :"Shall it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand of the angels sent down (for you)?" - 3:124) was revealed and referred to wherein is the promise of sending a force of three thousand angels from the heavens in order to support believers.

As for the third promise of five thousand, it was made subject to the condition that should the enemy launch a sudden offensive, a supporting force of five thousand angels will be sent down. That promise appears in the verse which follows verse 124 of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3) cited immediately above. Given here are the words in which it has been mentioned:

بَلٰٓى اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِيْنَ

"Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you even in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks" (3:125).

Some Commentators have said that this promise had three conditions: (1) Fortitude, (2) Taqwā or fear of Allah and (3) Sudden and all-out attack by the opposing forces. Out of these, the first two conditions were already fulfilled by the noble Companions for no departure from these was witnessed in this battlefield from the beginning to the end.

But, what did not take place was the third condition of a sudden attack. Therefore, things did not reach the point where the army of five thousand angels was to be inducted.

So, this matter remained revolving between one and three thousand which also lends to the probability that the figure of three thousand may mean the one thousand sent earlier to which an additional force of two thousand was added and made to be three thousand - and it is also probable that these three thousand were in addition to the first one thousand.

At this stage, it is also interesting to note that the promise of sending three groups of angels in these three verses (8:9; 3:124; 3:125) mentions a quality particular to each group. In the present verse, verse 9 of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, where the promise is for one thousand, the word used to describe the quality of these angels is مُرْدِفِيْنَ (*murdifīn*: translated here as 'one following the other'). Perhaps, the indication already given within the text is that there are others too coming behind these angels.Then, in the first verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (3:124) quoted above, the quality of the angels has been given as: مُنْزَلِيْنَ (*munzalīn* : translated as 'sent down [for you]'). The sense is that these angels will be made to descend from the heavens. In this, there is a hint towards the special arrangement made in this connection - that the angels already present on the earth will not be employed for this mission, instead of which, it will be by special appointment and despatch that these angels will be sent down from the heavens to fulfill the assignment they have been sent to carry out. After that, we have the second verse (3:125) of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān where the figure of five thousand has been mentioned. There, the quality of the angels has been stated to be: مُسَوِّمِيْنَ (*musawwimīn*: translated as 'having distinct marks') that is, they shall be appearing in a particular dress and distinctive signs and marks. This is corroborated by Ḥadīth narrations which report that the headgear of angels that descended during the battle of Badr was white and that of the angels who were sent down to help believers in the battle of Ḥunayn was red.

Finally, towards the end of the verse (10), it was said: وَمَا النَّصْرُ اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And the help is from none but Allah. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise). Here, Muslims have been warned that all help, what-

ever and from wherever it may be, open or secret, is from Allah Ta'ālā alone and issues forth through His power and control only. The help and support of angels is also subject to nothing but His command. Therefore, all believers must look up to none but the most pristine Being of Allah who is One and with Whom there is no partner or associate - because, He is the possessor of Power and Wisdom at its greatest.

Verses 11 - 14

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَىٰ
قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ ﴿١١﴾ إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ
أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ سَأُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ
بَنَانٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٣﴾ ذَٰلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوهُ وَأَنَّ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٤﴾

When He covered you with drowsiness, as tranquility (descending) from Him and sent down upon you water from the heavens, so that He might purify you with it, and remove from you the impurity of Satan, and so that He might strengthen your hearts and make (your) feet firm therewith. [11]

When your Lord revealed to the angels: "I am with you. So, make those who believe firm. I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So, strike over the necks, and smite them (so as to even reach) every finger-joint of theirs." [12]

That is because they were hostile to Allah and His Messenger. And whoever becomes hostile to Allah and His Messenger, then, Allah is severe at punishment. [13] **That is what you have to taste and for the disbelievers there is the punishment of the Fire.** [14]

Commentary

Being enumerated from the very beginning are blessings of Allah Ta'ālā which descended upon His obedient servants. The events of the battle of Badr are parts of the same chain. Out of the many blessings bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā during the battle of Badr, the very first blessing is the bringing out of Muslims for this Jihād, which finds mention in: كَمَآ اَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ (When your Lord made you leave your home - 5). The second blessing is the promise of providing the support of angels which has been made in: وَاِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ (And when Allah was promising you - 7). The third blessing is the answer to the prayer made and the fulfillment of the promise of support given, which has been mentioned in: اِذْ تَسْتَغِيْثُوْنَ رَبَّكُمْ (When you were calling your Lord for help - 9). The fourth blessing finds its description in the first of the set of four verses cited immediately above (11). Mentioned here are two blessings for the believers: (1) The removal of anxiety and fatigue through a mass descension of drowsiness; and (2) the provision of water for them through rains which aslo made the battlefield smooth for them and muddy for the enemy.

According to the details of what happened there, when this first ever confrontation between *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and Islām turned into a certain battle, the army of the disbelievers of Makkah had already reached and set up camp at a place which was located on high grounds with water close to them. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Companions arrived at that place, the lower part of valley fell to their lot. The Holy Qur'ān has portrayed the lay-out of this battlefield in verse 42 of this very Sūrah by saying: اِذْ اَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰى (When you were on the nearest cliff, and they were on the farthest one - 8:42) a detailed description of which shall appear later.

The spot reaching where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first camped was considered strategically inappropriate by Sayyidnā Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir رضى الله عنه who knew this territory well. Keeping this in view, he respectfully inquired: '*Yā Rasūlallah*! Does this place you have selected happen to be in compliance to a command from Allah Ta'ālā in which we have no say, or it has been taken to as simply based on opinion and expedience?' He said: 'No, this is not something Divinely ordained. This can be changed or re-located.' After that, Sayy-

idnā Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir submitted: 'If so, it is better to move forward from this spot, reach a water source close to the armed force of Makkan chiefs and take it over. We are sure to have an abundant supply of water there.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted his proposal, marched ahead, took over the spot with water, had a water tank built there and saw to it that an ample supply of water has been stored in it.

After he had taken care of this strategic need, Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه said: "*Yā Rasūlallāh*! We would like to put up a shaded structure for you at a secure place where you could stay and where your riding animals could be nearby you. The plan behind this arrangement is that we shall wage our Jihād against the enemy and if Allah were to bless us with victory, then, our plan is well-served for this is what we like for you. But, God forbid, should things turn out otherwise, then, you would be in a position to ride your camel and go back to join the rest of your Companions left behind in Madīnah - because, I am strongly inclined to believe that they are no less than us in terms of sacrifice for the cause and love for you. In fact, if they had any idea of the eventuality that you will have to fight against this armed force, then, none of them would have chosen to stay behind. I am sure when you are back in Madīnah, they will continue to be your companions in the mission.' On this gallant and noble offer, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prayed for them. So, a ragtag awning of some modest sort was set up for him in which there was no one but he himself and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه. Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه, sword in hand, stood on the door, guarding.

This was the first night of confrontation. A bunch of three hundred and thirteen mostly unarmed souls stood against a thousand strong armed force, being three times more in numbers. They had already occupied the better spot of the battlefield. The lower part of the valley which was sandy and difficult to move around had fallen to the lot of Muslims. Everyone was concerned. Anxiety was natural. The Satan also started instigating some people: Here you are, claiming to be on the path of truth and at a time so crucial you are busy making Tahajjud prayers rather than go and take some rest. But, cast a look at the ground reality - you will see your enemy casting his heavy

shadows on you being far superior to you from all angles. Under these conditions, Allah Ta'ālā cast a unique kind of drowsiness on Muslims which made every Muslim, whether or not he intended to sleep, go to sleep compulsively.

Ḥafiẓ al-Ḥadīth, Abū Ya'lā reports that Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه said: On that night of the battle of Badr, there remained no one from among us who did not go to sleep. Only the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remained awake throughout the night and kept busy with the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud right through dawn.

Quoting the Ṣaḥīḥ, Ibn Kathīr reports that, on that night, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was busy with the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud in his '*Arīsh*, the twig-roofed hutment set up for him, he too was somewhat affected by drowsiness. But, immediately coming out of it with a smile, he said: "O Abū Bakr, here comes good news for you. This is Jibra'īl عليه السلام standing near the cliff" and saying this, he walked out of the hutment reciting the verse which follows: سَيُهْزَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ (Soon the gathered group of the enemy will be defeated and they will turn [their] backs - 54:45). According to some narrations, when he came out, he pointed towards various spots and said: 'This is the spot where Abū Jahl will be killed, and this is for so and so, and this is for so and so.' Then, events turned out to be precisely as he had indicated. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

And as it happened during the battle of Badr where Allah Ta'ālā cast a particular kind of drowsiness on all Companions of the Prophet in order to remove their fatigue and tension, so it did during the battle of 'Uḥud.

Sufyān al-Thawrī رحمة الله عليه reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه that sleep during the state of war is a sign of peace and tranquility from Allah Ta'ālā - and sleep during the state of Ṣalāh is from the Satan. (Ibn Kathīr)

The second blessing Muslims received that night was that rains came and totally overturned all battle plans. The spot occupied by the Quraysh army was hit by heavy rains which made it muddy and difficult to walk through. Then, the spot where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions were camped was sandy and difficult to walk

through at the very outset. When rains came, this spot received the lighter part of it which helped firm up the sandy surface making the ground nice and easy to walk on.

The first of the four verses appearing above (11) mentions these very two blessings - sleep and rain - which, by upturning the blueprint of the battlefield, washed off the Satanic scruples which were bothering some weak combatants, scruples like: 'Here we are, on the side of truth, yet appear to be all subdued and overshadowed while there stands our enemy who is, despite being on the side of falsehood, basking in the sunshine of power, majesty and confidence!'

So, Muslims are being told in this verse to remember the time when Allah was covering them up with drowsiness to make tranquility from Him descend upon them, and He was sending down rains upon them so that He purifies them with that water - and removes from them the impurity of Satanic instigations and scruples, and strengthens their hearts, and makes their feet firm.

Mentioned in the second verse (12) is the fifth blessing which was beamed at Muslims in this battlefield of Badr. That came through the command addressed to the angels sent by Allah Ta'ālā to help Muslims, in which He said: 'I am with you. So, you make believers firm. I am going to cast terror into the hearts of disbelievers. So, strike over their necks, and smite them [so as to even reach] every finger-joint of theirs.'

Here, the angels have been charged with two duties: (1) That they should encourage, exhort and empower Muslims with steadfastness which can be done either by appearing on the battlefield, increase their group strength and participate with them in fighting, or also by using their unobserved ability to dispose matters (*taṣarruf*) they would make the hearts of Muslims firm and empower them to operate more effectively. (2) The second duty entrusted with them was that the angels should themselves engage in fighting and attack disbelievers. From this verse (at least for the purpose on hand), it is apparent that the angels did both. They acted upon the hearts of Muslims, increased their courage and strength, and took part in the actual fighting as well. This is also confirmed by some Ḥadīth narrations which have been reported in details in Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr and Maẓharī

and where eye witnesses to the participation of angels in actual fighting have been documented on the authority of the noble Ṣaḥābah.

In the third verse (13), it was said that the reason for whatever happened during this confrontation between *kufr* and Islam was that those disbelievers were hostile to Allah and His Messenger and whoever becomes hostile to Allah and His Messenger, then, for him the punishment of Allah is customarily severe. This tells us that, on the one hand, Muslims were the blessed ones in the battle of Badr for victory became theirs. On the other hand, by sending punishment on disbelievers through Muslims, they were chastised a little for their evil doings - while, the much heavier punishment awaits them in the Hereafter - both of which have been described in the fourth verse (14) by saying: ذَٰلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوهُ وَأَنَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ (That is what you have to taste, and for the disbelievers there is the punishment of the Fire).

In other words, what is being said here is: This is a little punishment from Us. So, taste it and better realize that, after this, the punishment of the fire of Jahannam is due to come for disbelievers, a punishment which is severe, lasting and unimaginable.

Verses 15 - 19

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ
الْأَدْبَارَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَمَن يُوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ أَوْ
مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ ۚ وَمَا
رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ ۚ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً
حَسَنًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُوهِنُ كَيْدِ
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ إِن تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ ۖ وَإِن تَنتَهُوا
فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَإِن تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ وَلَن تُغْنِيَ عَنكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ
شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

O those who believe, when you face the disbelievers marching to battle, then, do not turn your backs on

them. [15] **And whoever turns his back on them that day, unless maneuvering for battle or turning to join a company, turns with wrath from Allah, and his abode is Jahannam and it is an evil place to return.** [16]

So, you did not kill them, but Allah killed them. And you did not throw when you threw but Allah did throw, so that He may bless the believers with a good favour. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [17] **Apart from that, Allah is the One who frustrates the device of the disbelievers.** [18]

If you pray for victory, 'victory' has come upon you. And if you give up, it is better for you. And if you repeat, We shall repeat. And your people shall not suffice you at all, even though they are many in number; and Allah is with the believers. [19]

Commentary

Out of the verses appearing above, the first two (15-16) tell us about a military law of Islam. The word: زحف (*zaḥf*) translated here literally as 'marching to battle' denotes the confrontation and intermingling between the two armies. The sense is that once a war is on, turning back and deserting the battlefield is not permissible for Muslims.

The second verse (16) refers to an exception to this rule, and to a severe punishment for illegal deserters.

The exception covers two states: (1) إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ (unless maneuvering for battle,) (2) أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ (or turning to join a company) that is, when a war is on, turning one's back is permissible only under two conditions. Firstly, this turning back from the battlefield should simply be strategic, just to hoodwink the enemy and certainly not to bolt away from the battlefield in reality. In short, the purpose in sight should be to launch a blitzkrieg or a lightning attack on the enemy by making them complacent about what may look like a real retreat. This is the meaning of the statement: إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ (unless maneuvering for battle) because the word: تحرف (*taḥarruf*) is used to refer to turning away towards a certain side obliquely. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The second state of exception in which it is permissible to turn one's back from the battlefield is that one realizes the weakness of one's combating force and moves back to gather additional support

from Mujahidin and come back into the battle with added strength. This is what the sentence: اَوْمُتَحَيِّزًا اِلٰى فِئَةٍ (or turning to join a company) means because the word: تَحَيُّز (tahayyuz) literally means to join up and فِئَة (fi'ah) signifies a group, company or force. Thus, the sense is that should one back out from the battlefield with the intention of joining up with one's group, assembling the needed fighting support and returning to attack again, then, this is permissible.

After having mentioned this exception, the text describes the punishment of those who deserted the battlefield or turned their backs illegally without being under conditions which have been granted exception. The words are: فَقَدْ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ that is, the deserter and dodger of a Jihad battle only 'turns back with wrath from Allah, and his abode is Jahannam (Hell) and it is an evil place to return.'

From these two verses (15-16) comes the governing rule that, no matter how large in numbers, and superior in strength and power, the adversary may be, it is Haram (forbidden, unlawful) for Muslims to turn their backs from fighting them - with the exception of two conditions: (1) That this turning back is not for deserting the battlefield, instead, is a feinted move or strategic ploy, (2) and that it is with the intention to return with auxiliary forces and resume attacking afresh.

When these verses were revealed during the battle of Badr, this was the operating order of the time, that is, take on the enemy, irrespective of its numbers, strength and power, and irrespective of your own numbers and strength as compared to it, then do not turn back from the combat and run for life. This is how it was in Badr. Only three hundred and thirteen Mujahidin were facing one thousand, three times their number. It was later on that injunctions relaxing restrictions were revealed in verses 65 and 66 of Surah Al-Anfal, now under study. In verse 65, twenty Muslims have been commanded to wage Jihad against two hundred disbelievers, and one hundred Muslims against one thousand of them. Then, in verse 66, the following law of additional relaxation was revealed:

اَلْئٰنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ

Now Allah Ta'ālā has granted relief to you in view of your weakness whereby one hundred steadfast Muslims shall be able to overcome two hundred disbelievers.'

The indication given here is that Muslims are, after all, expected to overcome an adversary twice their number, therefore, it is not permissible for them to turn their backs. However, if the numerical strength of the adversary turns out to be more than twice their number, then, under such a condition, it is permissible to disengage and leave the battlefield.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: 'A person who fled against three did not 'flee' but one who fled against two is a deserter, that is, is answerable for a major sin.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). Now, this is the injunction which holds good right through the Last Day. According to the consensus of the majority of the Muslim Ummah, and in the view of the Four Imams, the exact Islamic Legal position in this case is: Until such time the number of the adversary does not go beyond twice, it is Ḥarām to desert the battlefield, and is a major sin.

In the Ṣaḥīḥayn (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم identified seven things as fatal for a person. He counted fleeing from the battlefield also as one of these. And the Holy Qur'ān rated the early retreat of the noble Companions during the battle of Ḥunayn as a Satanic slip which confirms that it is a great sin. The actual statement of the Qur'ān is: إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَٰنُ (Satan has but made them slip - 3:155)

Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd have reported the incident of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that once he left the battlefield, took refuge in Madīnah and presented himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he confessed to his misconduct and expressed his utter dismay and confusion on having become a sinning deserter of the battlefield. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, far from being displeased with him, rather comforted him by saying: بل انتم العكارون وانا فئتكم (No, you are not of those who flee from battles, instead of that, you are here to seek support after which you are to go back into the battle and attack once again, and I am, for you, the support). Here, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has made it very clear that the act of those who fled into

Madīnah for refuge is included under the exception which permits leaving the battlefield in order to assemble and bring back additional support. It was actually on the basis of the specially high degree of fear, awe and recognition of the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā which was part of his persona that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه was disturbed even at this maneuvered retreat as well and went to the act of presenting himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as if he had committed some crime.

In the third verse (17), after recounting the rest of the event which transpired at the battle of Badr, Muslims have been instructed that they should not take the defeat of many by some and of the strong by the weak in the miraculous victory of the battle of Badr to be the outcome of their own effort and deed. In fact, they should be looking towards the most sacred Being of Allah whose help and support totally re-wrote all plans in this Battle.

The details of this event mentioned in the verse have been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Al-Ṭabarī, Al-Baihaqī and others as based on narrations from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and others.

On the day of the confrontation at Badr, says the report, when the armed force of one thousand men of Makkah entered into the valley from behind the cliff, it did not hide its contempt for Muslims being low in numbers and weak in combat fitness. And on top of it, it came waxing proud over its numbers and strength, betraying great arrogance. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم raised his hands of prayer saying: '*Yā* Allah! Here come Your beliers, the Quraysh of Makkah, all proud and arrogant. The promise of victory You have made to me, let that promise be fulfilled soon.' (Rūḥ al-Bayān) Thereupon, angel Jibra'īl came and said: 'You take a handful of dust and throw it towards the army of the enemy.' He did what he was asked to do. And according to a report of Ibn Abī Ḥātim based on a narration of Ibn Zayd, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم picked up a handful of dust and pebbles thrice; the first he threw towards the right of the army, the second towards the left, and the third towards the center. The outcome was that these one to three handfuls of dust and pebbles were Divinely spread out miraculously all over them, so much so that not one man from the force was left without having received part of this dust and

these pebbles over his eyes and face. Naturally, this caused a rampage in the army. Muslims pursued them. The angels were with them, fighting and killing. (Maẓharī, Rūḥ)

Finally, some fighting men from the opposing side were killed, some were taken prisoners, the rest ran away and the battle was won by the Muslims.

This great victory was achieved by Muslims in the background which was initially full of dismay and hopelessness. So, when they returned from the battlefield, they started talking about it. The Companions got busy relating their deeds on the battlefield. Revealed thereupon was this verse: فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوْهُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَتَلَهُمْ (So, you did not kill them, but Allah killed them -17) through which they were instructed not to wax proud over their effort and deed, for that which happened there was not simply the outcome of their personal effort and deed. In fact, it was purely and simply the fruit of the help and support given by Allah Ta'ālā - and the enemies killed at their hands were not really killed by them, rather, they were killed by Allah Ta'ālā.

Similarly, addressing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it was said: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى (And you did not throw when you threw, but Allah did throw). It means that the specific outcome of the act of throwing, whereby it would reach the eyes of every fighting man in the enemy force and frighten them all, was not the direct effect of 'his' throwing. It was, in fact, the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which generated the format of this situation. To quote Rūmī for a chic poetic explanation:

مارمیت اذ رمیت گفت حق کارما برکارها دارد سبق

'And you did not throw when you did,' said Allah,
'Our Act precedes all other acts.'

Certainly valuable for Muslims - more valuable than their victory in Jihād - was this instruction which disengaged their minds from means and tied it up with the master-provider of all means, and through it, saved them from falling into the trap of pride and arrogance which generally intoxicates victorious nations. After that it was said that victory and defeat are subservient to the command of Allah and that His support is with those who are obedient: وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مِنْهُ بَلَاۤءً حَسَنًا (so that He may bless the believers with a good favour). It means

that Allah blessed the believers with this great victory in order to give them the best of return for their obedience and struggle. The literal meaning of the word: بلاء (*balā'*) is test or trial. As for the test taken by Allah Ta'ālā, it sometimes comes when someone is put to distress or hardship - and there are occasions when this is done by giving someone comfort and wealth. Here, the name of *ḥasan* (good) *bala'* (trial) has been given to a test which is taken by giving comfort, wealth, support and victory to find out if people who are so blessed take it to be a favour from Allah and are grateful for it, or take it to be the outcome of their personal excellence, become proud and arrogant and undo what they did - because, there is no room for pride from anyone before Allah Ta'ālā.

In contrast to this, yet another benefit which came out of this victory has been described in the fourth verse as: ذٰلِكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوْهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (Apart from that, Allah is the One who frustrates the device of the disbelievers - 18). In other words, it can be said that Muslims were blessed with this victory for yet another reason, that is, the plans of the disbelievers should be rendered ineffective through it, something which would make them understand that Divine support is not with them - and no plan can succeed without it.

The fifth verse (19) carries an address to the defeated disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh and refers to an event which came to pass when the Quraysh army was about to depart Makkah on their mission to confront Muslims.

According to the report of that event, when the army of Qurayshi disbelievers was ready to march against Muslims, the commander of the army, Abū Jahl and other chiefs had made earnest prayers holding the covering drapes of the Baytullah in their hands before leaving Makkah. Strange as it would seem, they did not specifically pray for their own victory. Rather, the prayer they made was in general terms and its words were:

> "O Allah, let victory come to the superior-most out of the two armies, and to the better-guided out of the two groups, and to the nobler out of the two parties, and to the religion and faith which is more sublime out of the two." (Maẓharī)

It is interesting that these dim-witted people were under the

impression that they were the ones higher and superior and better-guided as compared to Muslims, therefore, they surmised that the prayer they were making was in their own favour. They actually wanted that Allah would, through their prayer, give His verdict as to who was true and who was false. Thus, when they win, their victory would become the Divine verdict on their being on the side of truth.

But, they did not know that the prayer they were making was really a curse for their own selves, and that it was a supplication for the good of Muslims. After the end of the battle came, the Qur'ān told them: اِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوْا فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ (If you pray for victory, "victory" has come upon you) that is, 'if you are looking for a Divine verdict, that is before you - truth has triumphed and falsehood has been defeated. Then: وَاِنْ تَنْتَهُوْا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ (if you give up it is better for you) that is, 'now is the time when, if you abandon your disbelief and hostility, it will turn out to be better for you.' And, if you still decide to revert back to your wickedness and the threat of armed aggression, then, Allah too will revert back and support Muslims: وَاِنْ تَعُوْدُوْا نَعُدْ (And if you repeat, We shall repeat). In that case, the consequence would be: وَلَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَّلَوْ كَثُرَتْ (And your people shall not suffice you at all, even though they are many in number) that is, 'your numerical superiority and group strength shall be of no avail against the help and support given by Allah.' As for the help and support of Allah: وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (Allah is with the believers) that is, 'how can any group or power work for you when Allah Ta'ālā, the very possessor of absolute power, is with the Muslims?'

Verses 20 - 24

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَاَنْتُمْ
تَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِيْنَ
لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّاَسْمَعَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ
اَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا
اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ

اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَاَنَّهٗۤ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

O those who believe, obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn away from Him while you are listening. [20] **And do not be like those who say, "We have heard" while they do not listen.** [21] **Surely, the worst of all animals in the sight of Allah are deaf and the dumb who do not understand.** [22] **And had Allah seen in them some good, He would have made them listen. And had He made them listen, they would have turned away paying no heed.** [23] **O those who believe, respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life, and be sure that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered.** [24]

Commentary

The event of the battle of Badr which has been described in a somewhat detailed manner in the previous verses contains many lessons in hard advice and wisdom both for those who adhere to Islam and those who stick to disbelief. These appear intermittently during the course of relevant narrations and serve as warning signals.

For example, in the previous verses, after having recounted the defeat and disgrace of the disbelievers of Makkah, it was said: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (That is because they were hostile to Allah and His Messenger - 13). It means that the disbelievers of Makkah were defeated despite their numerical and logistic strength and the real reason behind it was that they had elected to act hostile to Allah and His Messenger. In this, there lies a chastening lesson for people who bypass the most perfect power of the Creator and Master of the heavens and the earth - the power that is visible and the power that is invisible - and who opt for placing their reliance on material strengths only, or just choose to cheat their own selves by hoping and praying that the help and support of Allah will be by their side despite all their acts of disobedience to Him.

In the present verse, the other side of this very problem has been taken up by addressing Muslims. Stated briefly, the truth of the matter is that Muslims were blessed with this great victory despite their low numbers and ill-equipped fighting force only through the

help and support of Allah Almighty - and this Divine help and support is the outcome of their obedience to Allah. This obedience is what Muslims have been obligated with and to this they have to adhere firmly: يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ (O those who believe, obey Allah and His Messenger). In the sentence which follows, the same subject has been further emphasized by saying: وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُوْنَ (and do not turn away from him while you are listening). The sense is that once you have listened to the Qur'ān, the true word of Allah, do not go about doing things against the norms of genuine obedience.

Listening denotes listening to what is the truth and it has four degrees in terms of effective response. (1) The hearer with ears simply heard some voice but neither tried to understand it, nor understood it, nor believed in or relied upon it, nor did he act accordingly. (2) He heard it through his ears all right, even understood it, but did neither believe in it nor acted accordingly. (3) He heard, he understood, even believed and trusted, but did not act accordingly. (4) He heard, he understood, he believed, he trusted - and acted accordingly as well.

It is obvious that the real purpose of listening is fully realized only through the fourth degree - which is the station of perfect believers. As for the earlier three degrees, the act of listening described there is imperfect and incomplete which, in a manner of saying, could be set aside as just not listening - as readily pointed to in the verses appearing next. The third degree mentioned above has the ingredients of hearing the truth, understanding it and believing in it, but lacks corresponding deeds. Here, the real purpose of listening is though not realized as it should be, yet belief has its own importance and can not be rejected as useless. This degree pertains to sinning Muslims. Then there is the second degree where we find only listening and understanding but no belief and no corresponding deed. This degree is that of the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites) for they do listen to the Qur'ān, understand it too, even have a feigned claim to desired belief and deed, but the reality is that they do not believe and do what is right and due. Finally, the first degree is that of polytheists and disbelievers who listened to the message of truth and the *'āyāt* of the Qur'ān with their own ears but were never motivated enough to understand and think about that.

In the verse cited above (20), the address is to Muslims who have been told that they do listen to the message of truth after all, that is, the initial requirement of listening, understanding and believing is present in their attitude as it is, but they have to do more than that. They must act, do what must be done and do it fully and faithfully. They have been asked not to do anything which would take them away from the path of obedience so that the real purpose of listening to the word of truth stands realized fully.

For added emphasis on the same subject, it was said in the second verse (21): وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ (and do not be like those who say, "we have heard" while they do not listen). Meant here are common disbelievers who claim to be listening but make no such claim about believing. Also meant here are the hypocrites who go beyond the elementary listening which they already do. In fact, they also claim to understand what that they listen to and to believe in it as well. But, the truth of the matter is that they both remain deprived of genuine deliberation and correct understanding. Therefore, their listening falls under the category of not listening. So, Muslims have been forbidden from becoming like them.

The third verse (22) strongly condemns those who do not listen to what is the truth thoughtfully and let it go unaccepted. The Qur'ān has declared such people to be worse than animals. The words used are: إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ (Surely, the worst of all animals in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb who do not understand).

The word: دواب (*dawābb*) is the plural form of: دَآبَّة (*dābbah*). Literally, everything that walks on the earth is called '*dābbah*.' But, in usage, only quadruped animals are called '*dābbah*.' So, the sense of the verse is that the worst quadrupeds in the sight of Allah are the ones deaf against listening to the truth and dumb when it comes to accepting it. Even someone deaf and dumb could, if he has the least fund of reason in him, make himself understood by simple gestures in a two-way communication. But, these people are not only deaf and dumb, they are short on reason also. It is obvious that for a person, who is deaf, dumb; and devoid of reason too, the lines of communication shall remain blocked and there will be no way they would understand or be made to understand.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has made it clear that human beings have been created with the best of destiny. They have been made the superior-most among the created and the universe has been placed at their service. These are great blessings which lie embedded in and dependent on listening to truth and obeying it. Once human beings turn their backs on listening to the truth, understanding and accepting it, all these blessings are sucked away from them and they are relegated to some species worse than animals.

It appears in Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān that human beings are, in terms of their original creation, superior to all animals, but are lower in rank as compared to angels. But, when human beings strive on the pathway of obedience to Allah, their creator, they rise higher in status than angels too. However, should they turn away from the pathway of obedience to Allah, they are condemned to become the lowest of the low, far too worse than animals.

In the fourth verse (23), it was said: وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّاَسْمَعَهُمْ وَلَوْ اَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ (And had Allah seen in them some good, He would have made them listen. And had He made them listen, they would have turned away paying no heed). In other words, the sense of the verse is: Had Allah seen in them some pliability towards receiving good counsel, He would have blessed them with the ability to listen with faith - and if, in their present state of being with no desire to receive truth, He were to make them listen to what is true, they would have certainly turned away from it paying no heed.

The word: خير (*khayr*: good) at this place means the desire to find out the truth, for it is the quest for truth which opens the doors of deliberation and understanding and it is this very quest which enables one to believe and act. Thus, whoever has no quest for truth is as if he has no good in him. If such people did have some good in them, it is obvious that it would have been within the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Now, when they have no good in them as borne by the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, it tells us that they stand deprived of every possible good in the real sense. Therefore, if they were to be invited to ponder, deliberate and believe in the truth within this state of deprivation, they would have never accepted it - rather, they would have turned away from it and run. This aversion, that is, would not be because of any flaw in the

religion they may have noticed which made them reject it. In fact, they just did not pay heed to what was the truth.

Incidentally, the stipulation made above also helps remove the nagging logical doubt which bothers many a learned people. They surmise that this is the first form of analogical deduction where the surrender of the middle premise seems to be yielding the wrong outcome. The answer is that the middle premise has not been repeated here because the sense of the first word: لَاَسْمَعَهُمْ (*la asma'ahum*: He would have made them listen) is separate from the second: وَلَوْ اَسْمَعَهُمْ (*wa lau asma'ahum*: and had He made them listen) which carries its own sense apart from the first. Meant in the first is listening to accept and listening to benefit from, while the sense of the second is bland listening with nothing to it.

In the fifth verse (24), believers have been addressed once again. Commanded to obey Allah and His Messenger in a particular manner, they have been told that the thing to which Allah and His Messenger invite you is something which brings no benefit to Allah and His Messenger *per se*. Instead of that, all Divine injunctions have been prescribed for nothing but their own benefit. So, said in the manner pointed to above, was: اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ (respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life).

What is the 'life' mentioned in this verse? Since several probabilities exist in its interpretation, learned commentators have taken different interpretive positions. According to Suddiyy, that life-giving thing is 'Īmān (faith) because the disbeliever is dead. Qatādah said: That is Qur'ān in which lies all life and success of both the worlds, Dunyā and 'Ākhirah. Mujāhid said: That is truth. Ibn Isḥāq said: It means Jihād through which Allah Ta'ālā conferred honour on Muslims. All these probabilities mentioned here are sound as they are. There is no contradiction in them. The larger sense is that 'Īmān, Qur'ān or the following of truth are things which put life into the heart and the life of the heart is nothing but that everything which becomes a barrier between the Creator and the created, barriers like inertia and desire, should be removed from the way of truth leaving it free from whatever obstructions there are in order that the heart is filled with the light of insight into the Creator.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, Tirmidhī and Al-Nasā'ī have reported that on a certain day, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent for Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ who was busy with his Ṣalāh at that time. However, he completed his Ṣalāh sooner than he would have normally done and presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked: 'Why did you come so late despite that I called you?' Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ submitted his excuse: 'I was in the state of Ṣalāh.' He said: 'Did you not hear what Allah Ta'ālā has said in: اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ (Respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you)?' Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'I shall obey it from now on. If you call me, even when I am making my Ṣalāh, I shall present myself before you immediately.'

It is on the basis of this Ḥadīth that some Muslim jurists have said that anything done during Ṣalāh in obedience to the command of the Messenger of Allah would not be taken as interference in Ṣalāh. However, there are other jurists who say that Ṣalāh would though be terminated due to doings contrary to the standard rules governing Ṣalāh and it would have to be offered later as *qaḍā'* (replaced for the missed or terminated Ṣalāh). But, the proper thing to do is that should the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم call someone, even if he is in the state of Ṣalāh, then, he should terminate his Ṣalāh and obey the call.

As for this form of obedience, it is exclusive to the *Rasūl* of Allah ﷺ. But, there are other occasions when one may apprehend the danger of serious loss coming to someone, then, at that time too, Ṣalāh should be terminated and amends be made later by offering *qaḍā'*. For example, if a person in the state of Ṣalāh sees that a blind man is about to reach and fall in a well or ditch, then, he should immediately terminate his Ṣalāh and go to save the handicapped man.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ (and be sure that Allah intervenes between man and his heart). This sentence can have two meanings, and both vibrate with great wisdom and good counsel, something one should always remember and live by.

One possible sense of the sentence is: When you are blessed with

the opportunity of doing something good, or staying safe from sin, then, go ahead and do it immediately - make no delay and take the lease of time so granted to be a blessing, because there are occasions when Divine decree becomes an intervening factor between man and his intention and he cannot succeed in doing what he intends to do. May be, a sickness overtakes, or death itself does, or some pre-occupation emerges out of nowhere and one just does not get the time to do that good or avoid that sin. Therefore, human beings should welcome the leave granted in terms of the years of life and access to time and refuse to put off until tomorrow what must be done today - for, who knows what is going to happen tomorrow?

من نمی گویم زیان کن یابفکر سود باش ای زفرصت بےخبر در هرچه باشی زود باش

I do not say that you run into some loss or go for your gain
Whatever be your option, O man unaware of time, be quick!

The second possible meaning emerges from the indication given by the sentence that Allah Ta'ālā is very near to His servant. In fact, in another verse of the Qur'ān (Qāf, 50:16): نَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ, Allah Ta'ālā says that He is close to man, much closer than his jugular vein.

Thus, the sense is that the heart of man is, in a special way, at the discretionary disposal of Allah Ta'ālā all the time. When He wills to keep a servant of His protected from evils, He puts a barrier between his heart and sins, and when misfortune is fated for someone, the barrier is placed between his heart and any possible good deeds by him. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to include the following prayer frequently when he prayed:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِيْ عَلٰى دِيْنِكَ

O reverser of hearts! Keep my heart firm on the Faith chosen by You.

The ultimate outcome of this too is no other but that one should not delay doing what must be done in obedience to the injunctions of Allah and His *Rasūl*, rather, one should take the lease of time given to him as a God-given opportunity and just go ahead and do it, for no one knows whether or not the surge and urge of this good deed remains active later on.

Verses 25 - 28

وَاتَّقُوْا فِتْنَةً لَّا تُصِيْبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْكُمْ خَآصَّةً ۚ وَ اعْلَمُوْآ
اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَاذْكُرُوْآ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ
مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ
فَاٰوٰىكُمْ وَاَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ
﴿٢٦﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَخُوْنُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ وَتَخُوْنُوْآ
اَمٰنٰتِكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاعْلَمُوْآ اَنَّمَآ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ
فِتْنَةٌ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

And beware of a punishment which shall not fall on the wrongdoers only, and be sure that Allah is severe at punishment. [25]

And remember when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth, fearing that the people would snatch you away. Then, He gave you shelter and fortified you with His support and provided you with good things, so that you may be grateful. [26]

O those who believe, do not betray the trust of Allah and the Messenger and do not betray your mutual trusts, while you know. [27]

And be aware that your wealth and your children are but a trial and that with Allah there is a great reward. [28]

Commentary

After having described some details of the battle of Badr and Divine blessings conferred on Muslims therein, the Holy Qur'ān has offered words of good counsel to Muslims as based on the outcome of the Battle. This presentation begins from: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ (O those who believe, respond to Allah and His Messenger - 8:24). The verses cited immediately above appear in continuation to the same.

Out of these, the first verse (25) carries an instruction to stay safe from a sin particularly, a sin the severe punishment of which does not remain restricted to only those who commit sins in a society. In fact, people who have committed no sin also get afflicted by it.

Which sin is that? The answers given by commentators vary. Some say: This sin is the forsaking of the struggle to Bid the Fair and Forbid the Unfair (*amr bi 'l-ma'rūf* and *nahy 'ani 'l-munkar*). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: Allah Ta'ālā has commanded Muslims that they should not allow any crime or sin to take roots in their social environment because, if they failed to do so, that is, did not forbid it despite seeing such crimes and sins and despite having the ability or capacity to stop it or to forbid it, then, Allah Ta'ālā will universalize His punishment for all of them which will spare neither the sinners nor the sinless.

The sinless mentioned here are people who are no accomplices of sinners in their initial sin, but they have certainly committed the sin of avoiding or abandoning the Divinely ordained duty of Bidding the Fair. Therefore, let there be no doubt here about the statement made. For example, here it is not valid to say that the passing on of the punishment of a sin committed by someone else to another person is injustice and that it is contrary to the Qur'ānic injunction: لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى (No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another person - 35:18) - because, here the sinners have been seized for the initial sin they themselves had committed while the sinless were seized for the sin of having abandoned the obligation of Bidding the Fair. Thus, no one's sin was placed on the shoulders of someone else.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها appearing in Sharḥ al-Sunnah and Ma'ālim of Imām al-Baghawī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said : Allah Ta'ālā does not subject common people with the punishment of some sin committed by a particular group among them - unless, there emerges a situation in which they see sin being committed around them and have the ability to stop it as well, yet, if they did not stop it, then, at that time, the punishment from Allah surrounds all of them.

Also reported authentically in Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and elsewhere is that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه said in one of his sermons: I have heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say: When people see an oppressor and do not step forward and hold his hand from inflicting injustice, then, the time is near that Allah Ta'ālā makes His punishment fall on all of them alike.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: Those who commit the sin of transgressing the limits set by Allah and those who ignore them knowingly or accomodate them psychophantly, that is, they do not try to stop them from that sin, are like passengers on two decks of a ship, the upper and the lower. People on the lower deck come up to procure water from the upper deck which causes discomfort for people there. Keeping this in view, the people of the lower deck opt for making a hole in the bottom of the boat and get their supply of water from there. Now, if the people of the upper deck see this misconduct and elect not to check and stop them from doing something like that, then, it is obvious, the water will fill into the whole boat and when the people of the lower deck will drown in it, those on the upper deck will not remain safe either, for they too will drown with the others.

It is on the basis of these narrations that many commentators have declared that the word: فِتْنَة (*fitnah*) in this verse refers to this very sin, that is, the forsaking of the obligation of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that this sin means the sin of the abandonment of Jihād specially at a time when a general call for Jihād is given to common Muslims from their Amīr, a call on which depends the security and defence of Islamic hallmarks. The reason is that this is a time when the curse of forsaking Jihād does not fall only on those who forsake Jihād but it also falls on the whole body of Muslims. Because Kuffār run over Muslim areas, women and children and old people and many innocent Muslims become victims of their killing and plunder. Their lives and properties are endangered. If that be the situation, 'punishment' would mean worldly distress and hardships.

The factual evidence of this explanation is that those who forsake Jihād have been condemned in the previous verses as well. Previous verses, such as: وَإِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لَكٰرِهُوْنَ (while a group from the believers were averse to it - 8:5) and: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوْهُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ (O those who believe, when you face the disbelievers marching to battle, then do not turn your backs on them - 8:15) have appeared in support of this approach to the problem.

The same thing happened at the battle of Badr when some Mus-

lims wavered with their choice of suitable conduct. They left their security post on the hills and came down. When this happened, the ill effects of their action did not remain restricted to those who had made the error, in fact, they hit the entire Muslim army, so much so that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was himself injured in this battle.

The second verse (26) also mentions several things which could make Divine injunctions easy on them. To pursuade them towards the option of obedience to Allah, Muslims have been reminded of their past weakness and of how Allah has blessed them with power and confidence by changing surrounding conditions through His grace and mercy. The text says:

وَاذْكُرُوٓا اِذْ اَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ
فَاٰوٰىكُمْ وَاَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ .

> And remember when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth, fearing that the people would snatch you away. Then, He gave you shelter and fortified you with His support and provided you with good things, so that you may be grateful - 26.

In this verse, Muslims are being asked to remember the conditions they were facing in Makkah during the pre-Hijrah period following which they were given the finest sanctuary at Madīnah. Not only that, they were also blessed with Divine support, power and victory over adversaries, as well as assets of great value. Then, towards the end of the verse, it was said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ (so that you may be grateful). It means that the purpose behind this great transformation of conditions around them supported by the flow of Divine blessings was to give them an opportunity to show their gratefulness as obedient servants of Allah, for the finest demonstration of gratefulness, in the real sense, comes through nothing but obedience to what Allah commands them to do.

In the third verse (27), Muslims have been instructed not to commit any breach of trust (*khiyānah*) in the dual rights due against them, that is, in the rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*) or in the mutual rights of the servants of Allah as enjoined on each other (*Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*) - either by failing to fulfill them totally, or by fulfilling them in a defective manner leaving one or the other shortcoming behind. Then, by saying:

وَاَنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ (while you know) at the end of the verse, it was stressed that they already knew that breach of trust was an evil conduct lined with many a curse, therefore, going ahead to do something like that was not what an intelligent person would choose to do - and, since the cause of negligence or shortcoming in fulfilling the rights of the servants of Allah is usually one's attachment to property and children, a warning was given in verse 28 by saying: وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّمَاۤ اَمۡوَالُكُمۡ وَاَوۡلَادُكُمۡ فِتۡنَةٌ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنۡدَهٗۤ اَجۡرٌ عَظِيۡمٌ (And be aware that your wealth and your children are but a trial and that with Allah there is a great reward).

The word: فِتۡنَة (*fitnah*) used here carries the sense of 'trial' as well as that of 'punishment.' Then, such things as become the cause of punishment are also referred to as '*fitnah*.' In different verses of the Qur'an, '*fitnah*' has been used to carry these three meanings. At this place, there is room for all three. There are occasions when one's own property and children become a can of troubles for him and that they would push him into negligence and disobedience and become the very cause of punishment right here in this world is all too obvious. Firstly, the sense could be that Allah aims to put you to test through your property and children for these are His blessings. Now, you prove whether you become grateful and obedient after having received these, or that you choose to be ungrateful and disobedient. Also possible is the second, even the third meaning, that is, should you become all engrossed in your love for your property and children and bring upon yourself the displeasure of Allah, then, these very children and property will become your punishment. There are occasions within this mortal world when one is engulfed into all sorts of hardships because of property and children and he starts experiencing the heat of punishment right here. Even if the case be otherwise, it stands settled that the property which was acquired or spent by ways counter to the injunctions of Allah Ta'ala will itself become, in the Hereafter, the active agent of punishment through snakes, scorpions and brandings by fire - as stated clearly in several verses of the Qur'an and numerous narrations of the Hadith. Finally, the third meaning is that these things become the cause of punishment. As pointed out a little earlier, it is quite evident that once these things become the cause of heedlessness towards and disobedience to Allah Ta'ala and His injunctions, they automatically become the cause of punishment. At the end of the verse (28), it was said: وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنۡدَهٗۤ اَجۡرٌ عَظِيۡمٌ (and that with Allah there is a great reward). In

other words, one should understand clearly that for a person who is not all-subdued by his love for property and children while doing his duty of being obedient to the commands of Allah and His *Rasūl*, there is a great reward for him with Allah.

As for the thematic content of this verse, it applies to all Muslims, but the cause of its revelation, according to the majority of commentators, is the event relating to Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ as it came to pass during the battle of Banū Qurayẓah. As reported, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the noble Companions kept the fort of Banū Qurayẓah under seige for twenty one days which compelled them to make the request that they be allowed to leave their homeland and go to Syria. In view of their wickedness, he did not accede to their request. Instead, he said that the only option of peace open to them was that they should now agree to whatever decision Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ gave in their case. Thereupon, they rquested that Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ be entrusted with this duty in place of Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ. The reason was that the family and property of Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ were located in the Banū Qurayẓah area. He, they thought, would take a lenient attitude in their case. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ as they requested. When he reached there, men and women from Banū Qurayẓah assembled around him and started crying. They asked: If we were to surrender at the command of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and come out of the fort, would he be lenient to us? Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ knew that leniency was not the settled policy in this matter. However, it was partly because of their wailing and plaint and partly because of his own love and concern for his family and children that he passed his hand sword-like over his neck giving the signal that they shall be slaughtered. Thus, as one would say, he disclosed the secret of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.

The consideration of property and the love of children and family made him do what he did. But, he was immediately alerted to what had happened. He realized that he had committed a breach of trust reposed in him by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When he returned from there, he was so overwhelmed by his sense of shame that he, rather than return to his master, went straight to his Masjid and it was a pillar of the Masjid that he tied himself to swearing that he will stay tied

like that until his *taubah* (repentance) was accepted, even if he were to die in that condition. So, for seven full days he stood there tied like that. His wife and daughter used to attend to him. They would untie him so that he could take care of his human compulsions and make his Ṣalāh. When he had done that, they would tie him again. He would usually avoid eating and drinking, so much so that he would faint out of weakness.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم got this news initially, he said: If he had come to me first, I would have sought forgiveness for him and his *taubah* would have been accepted. Now that he has gone through this act of his, there is nothing left but to wait for the revelation of the Divine acceptance of his *taubah*. So, it was after seven days when, late at night, these verses relating to the acceptance of his *taubah* were revealed. Some Ṣaḥābah gave him the good news and reached out to untie him from the pillar. But, he said: Until such time that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not decide to untie me, I would not prefer to be untied. Thus, when he came into the Masjid at the time of the Fajr Ṣalāh, he untied him with his own blessed hands. The real cause of the revelation of the cited verse which contains the prohibition of becoming overwhelmed by the concern and love for property and children and not fulfilling the trust of Allah is as stated above. Allah knows best.

Verses 29 - 33

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجۡعَل لَّكُمۡ فُرۡقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرۡ
عَنكُمۡ سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمۡ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الۡفَضۡلِ الۡعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾
وَإِذۡ يَمۡكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثۡبِتُوكَ أَوۡ يَقۡتُلُوكَ أَوۡ يُخۡرِجُوكَۚ
وَيَمۡكُرُونَ وَيَمۡكُرُ اللَّهُۖ وَاللَّهُ خَيۡرُ الۡمَٰكِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَإِذَا تُتۡلَىٰ
عَلَيۡهِمۡ ءَايَٰتُنَا قَالُوا قَدۡ سَمِعۡنَا لَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَقُلۡنَا مِثۡلَ هَٰذَآ إِنۡ
هَٰذَآ إِلَّآ أَسَٰطِيرُ الۡأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَإِذۡ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِن كَانَ هَٰذَا
هُوَ الۡحَقَّ مِنۡ عِندِكَ فَأَمۡطِرۡ عَلَيۡنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ أَوِ ائۡتِنَا
بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمۡ وَأَنتَ فِيهِمۡۚ وَمَا

كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

O those who believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong) and will write off your evil deeds and will forgive you. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. [29]

And (remember) when the disbelievers were plotting against you to hold you (in detention) or to kill you or to expel you. And they were plotting and Allah was plotting, and Allah is the best of those who plot. [30]

And when Our verses are recited to them, they say, "We have heard, if we wish, we can say something like this. It is nothing but the tales of the ancient." [31]

And (remember) when they said, "O Allah, if this be indeed the truth (revealed) from You, then, rain down upon us stones from the heavens, or bring upon us a painful punishment." [32]

And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst, nor would Allah send punishment upon them while they are seeking forgiveness. [33]

Commentary

The previous verse mentioned property and children as being a trial for mortal man because these are things the concern and love for which make one so overtaken that one would usually turn heedless towards Allah, the Creator and 'Ākhirah, the life-to-come - though, the rational demand of this great blessing was that one should have shown a far pronounced tilt towards Him because of this favour.

The first verse out of those quoted above completes this very subject. Here, it is said that the person who keeps his emotion subservient to his reason, remains steadfast in this trial and sees to it that the obedience to Allah Ta'ālā and love for Him stay ahead of everything - which is called Taqwā in the terminology of Qur'ān and Sharī'ah - then, he is blessed with three things in return. These are: (1) *Furqān* (the criterion of distinguishing between right and wrong), (2) *Kaffārah* of *Sayyi'āt* (the expiation of evils done) and (3) *Maghfirah* (forgiveness from Allah).

Furqān and *Farq* are both verbal nouns having the same meaning.

In usage, Furqān is the name of the thing which separates and makes two things clearly distinct. Therefore, a decision is called Furqān because it makes the difference between true and false very distinct. The help and support from Allah is also called Furqān because, through it, the protagonists of truth are made to win and their antagonists are made to taste defeat which makes the difference between right and wrong and true and false loud and clear. In the Holy Qur'ān, it is in this sense that the battle of Badr has been called the Yowm al-Furqān, the Day of Distinction (between right and wrong).

According to the majority of commentators, the sense of providing Furqān to those who fear Allah is that the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā is with them. No enemy can hurt them and success goes with them in all objectives they undertake:

هرکه ترسید از حق و تقوی گزید ترسد ازوے جن وانس وهرکه دید

Whoever fears Allah and takes to piety (Taqwā)
Is feared at sight by Jinns and Humans of the world.

It appears in Tafsīr Mahā'imī that an indication has been given here towards the slip made by Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی الله عنه because of his desire to provide protection for his family and children as mentioned a little earlier in the event relating to him. He was in the error particularly for the reason that the correct and the only method of keeping his family and children protected was no other but that total obedience to Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger صلی الله علیه وسلم should have been made his personal benchmark as a result of which whatever belonged to him including his family and children would have come under the security umbrella of Allah Ta'ālā. Other than this, there are other commentators who say that Furqān in this verse means the wisdom and insight through which it becomes easy to distinguish between true and false, the genuine and the fake. Thus, the core meaning of the statement would be that Allah Ta'ālā arms those who observe Taqwā with such insight and intelligence that it becomes easy for them to go ahead and decide between the good and the evil.

The second blessing received in return for practising Taqwā is the *Kaffārah* of *Saiyyi'āt* which means that the errors and slips which get to be committed by the practitioner of Taqwā are expiated and replaced right here in this mortal world, that is, he is blessed with the

ability or *Taufīq* of doing such good deeds as pale out all his slips of conduct. Finally, the third thing one is fortunate to receive in return for Taqwā is forgiveness in the Hereafter and the ultimate pardon of all shortcomings and sins.

At the end of the verse (29), it was said: وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ (And Allāh is the Lord of great bounty). By saying that Allah is limitless in His grace and favour, the hint given is that the return of a deed follows the measure of that deed. Here too, the good return mentioned as being the reward of Taqwā in three things comes as recompense or return but, Allah Ta'ālā is the master-dispenser of great grace and favour. When He gives, He is not bound by any measure, nor can anyone estimate or guess His favour and reward. Therefore, for those who take to Taqwā as their style of life, much greater hopes should be entertained from the grace and reward of Allāh Ta'ala in things other than the three mentioned earlier.

The second verse (30) points out to a particular reward and favour of Allah Ta'ālā which has been conferred on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the noble Companions and, in fact, on the whole world. This came to be before the Hijrah when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was encircled by the disbelievers and they were planning to detain or kill him. Then, Allah Ta'ālā made their unholy intentions lick dust and made it possible for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to reach the city of Madīnah in perfect safety.

The related incident has been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī on the authority of narrations from Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr and others. According to details of this incident, when the news about visiting residents of Madīnah embracing Islām became known in Makkah, the Quraysh of Makkah started worrying about it. They thought that the matter of people becoming Muslims was something restricted to Makkah upto that point of time, an area where they held all power in their hands. But, as Islām had started spreading in Madīnah, many Companions of the Prophet had migrated to that city, it went to prove that Muslims had another center in Madīnah where they could assemble a fighting force against them and possibly decide to attack. Alongwith this, they also realized that this was just the beginning when only some Companions have migrated to Madīnah. There was strong likelihood that

Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم may also go and join them. Therefore, the notable chiefs of Makkah called a special meeting for mutual consultations at Dār al-Nadwah. This place called Dār al-Nadwah was the home of Quṣay ibn Kilāb and was located close to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. These people used it as the place where they met to consult on national problems. During the Islamic period, it has been merged in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. It is said that the present Bāb al-Ziyadāt was the place known as Dār al-Nadwah.

As customary, the Quraysh chiefs met at Dār al-Nadwah for this significant consultation. All known leaders from the Quraysh such as Abū Jahl, Nadhr ibn Ḥārith, 'Utbah, Shaybah, Umaiyyah ibn Khalaf, Abū Sufyān and others participated. The agenda considered was how to confront and block the rising power of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Islām.

Before this consultative meeting could be called to order, there appeared Iblīs, the accursed, in the guise of an aged 'Arab Shaykh. People on the door of Dār al-Nadwah asked: Who are you and why have you come here? The answer given was: I am a resident of Najd. I have been told that you have assembled here to discuss an important national issue. So, as a well-wisher of our people, I am here in the hope that I too may be able to tender some useful advice on the matter under consideration.

His plea was heard. He was called in. Then, began the process of suggestions on the subject. According to a narration reported by Suhailī, it was suggested by Abū al-Bakhtārī ibn Hishām that 'he' (meaning the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) should be chained and detained in a house. The door should be locked and he should be left there until he dies, God forbid, his own death. Hearing this, the Shaykh of Najd - Iblīs, the accursed - said: This proposal is not sound for if you did that, this action is not going to remain hidden. In fact, it will be publicized far too widely. Then, you already know how good his Companions are in staking their lives for his sake. It is quite possible that these people may get together, attack you and rescue their prisoner from your detention. This caused voices to rise from all sides which supported the view of the Shaykh of Najd as sound. After that, Abū al-Aswad proposed that 'he' should be expelled out from Makkah. Let him go out of here and do whatever he wishes to do. This will make

our city safe from the disorder generated by him and, when we do so, we shall be doing no fighting and killing.

Hearing this, the Shaykh of Najd once again said: This proposal too is not sound. Do you not realize how soft-spoken a person he is? When people hear him talk, they are totally charmed by him. If he was left free like that, he would soon assemble a powerful group around him and attack you and defeat you. Now, it was Abū Jahl's turn to speak. He said: None of you seems to have understood what must be really done. Here is my plan of action. I propose that we pick out one youngman from each tribe out of all tribes of Arabia and arm each one of them with a lethal sword. Then, all of them, moving jointly and suddenly, attack and kill him. This action will at least deliver us from the problems engineered by him. Now, remains the aftermath of this killing. His tribe, Banū 'Abd Munāf, may rise with their claim of retaliation against the killing, something we are legally bound to face. So, in such a situation, when the actual killing was done, not by one single person, instead, by one person from each tribe, then, the claim of Qiṣāṣ, that is, taking life for life, cannot hold good after all. What would remain valid will be only the claim for blood money or property against *diyah*. That we shall collect from all tribes, give it to them and be done with it.

When the Shaykh of Najd, Iblīs, the accursed in disguise, heard this, he said: This is it. Nothing else is going to work. The whole assembly voted in his favour and it was resolved that this sinister plan would be put into action exactly the same night.

What these ignorant people could not understand was the unseen power of the prophets, may they all be blessed. As a consequence, two things happened. On the one hand, Archangel Jibra'īl informed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about everything that had transpired at their meeting at Dār al-Nadwah giving him a counter-plan whereby he would not sleep in his bed that night and telling him that Allah Ta'ālā has allowed him to migrate from Makkah.

On the other hand, by the fall of the evening, the Quraysh youngmen put a cordon round the house of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he saw this, he ordered Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه that he should sleep in the Prophet's bed that night giving him the good news that the plan was though full of a danger to his life obviously, yet

the enemies would not be able to harm him in any way.

Happy to be at his service, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ went into his bed. But, the problem was as to how the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was to get out of this siege. This difficulty was resolved by Allah Ta'ālā through a miracle when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, acting under the command of Allah Ta'ālā, came out with a handful of dust in one of his hands, responded to what his besiegers were saying about him, but it so happened that Allah Ta'ālā turned their sights and minds away from him in a way that none of them saw him even though he passed by them throwing dust on their heads. When he was gone, some visitor asked them as to why were they standing there. They said that they were waiting for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Thereupon, the visitor told them: You must be dreaming. He has already gone from here and while going he had been throwing dust on the heads of everyone among you. They all felt their heads with their hands which confirmed the fact that everyone's head had a deposit of dust on it.

When they went into the house, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ was lying in the bed of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, but the way he was tossing and turning in the bed made it possible for the besiegers to realize that he was not Muḥammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, therefore, they did not venture to kill him. After carrying out their operation of siege right through the morning, these people went back disappointed and disgraced. This night and the event of Sayyidnā 'Alī staking his life for the sake of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم therein is rated to be among special merits credited to Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ.

The three suggestions made to deal with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم during the consultative meeting of Quraysh chiefs have been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the verse: وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ (And [remember] when the disbelievers were plotting against you to hold you [in detention] or to kill you or to expel you - 30).

But, Allah Ta'ālā made all their plans and projections go to dust. That is why it was said towards the end: وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ (and Allah is the best of those who plot - 30). It means that Allah is the best of planners. His plan pales out all plans - as demonstrated in this case.

Lexically, the Arabic word: مکر (*makr*: translated as 'plot') means restricting one's adversary from carrying out his intention through some

strategem or plan. Then, if this action is taken for a good purpose, this type of '*makr*' is commendable and good - and should it be done for some evil purpose, it is blameworthy and bad. Therefore, this word can be used for man, and for Allah Ta'ālā as well. But, it is used for Allah only in an environment where the context and contrast of speech does not lend to any doubt of *makr* which is blameworthy (Maẓharī) as it is here.

At this place, it is also noteworthy that the words used at the end of the verse are in the indefinite tense which denotes present and future. It was said: وَيَمْكُرُوْنَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللّٰهُ (And they were plotting and Allah was plotting - 30), that is, they will keep plotting to hurt believers while Allah Ta'ālā will keep plotting to thwart and frustrate their plots. The hint given therein is that this will continue to remain a lasting mark of disbelievers that they go about engineering designs to hurt Muslims - while, in the same way, the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā shall also keep repulsing their evil designs against true believers.

Mentioned in verses 31 and 32 is the absurd remark made by Naḍr ibn Ḥārith, a participant of the same meeting at Dār al-Nadwah, with its reply appearing in verse 33. Naḍr ibn Ḥārith was a businessman who used to travel to different countries where he had repeated opportunities of seeing religious books of the Jews and Christians as well as witnessing their modes of worship. When he heard about the accounts of past communities appearing in the Holy Qur'ān, he said: قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هٰذَآ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (we have heard, if we wish, we can say something like this. It is nothing but the tales of the ancient - 31). Thereupon, some of the Companions challenged him: If you can say something like this, why would you not say it? The Qur'ān had already spoken on the subject and made it the very criterion of the true and the false. The challenge of the Qur'ān was beamed at the whole world. If its opponents were true, let them come up with the like of even a very small Sūrah. In contrast, those who claimed to stake their lives and sacrifice their wealth and children for the sake of upholding their counter-assertion could not even join up their abilities together and come out even with a small Sūrah which could stand on its own against the Qur'ān. Now, after all this, to stand up and say that we too can say something like this, if we so wished, is something no self-respecting person would venture to say. Thus, when the Companions told him

that the Qur'ān was nothing but the Divine word, he tried to counter the assertion by showing his own firm adherence to his incorrect faith by saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَالْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ

O Allah, if this be indeed the truth [revealed] from You, then, rain down upon us stones from the heavens, or bring upon us a painful punishment - 32.

The answer to this was given by the Qur'ān itself. First, it was said: وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَاَنْتَ فِيْهِمْ (And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst [in Makkah] - 33). The reason is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā with all blessed prophets that He would not send His punishment over a habitation where they are present until He takes out his prophets from there. This is as it happened in the case of Sayyidnā Hūd, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ and Sayyidnā Lūṭ, may peace be upon them all. Punishment did not come as long as they remained in their towns. Punishment came when they were taken out from there. As for the Prophet of Islām ﷺ, he was sent to this world as universal mercy. That Divine punishment would come on him while he was present in a town was an eventuality counter to his station.

In a nutshell, the answer is: Because of your hostility towards Qur'ān and Islām, you very much deserve to have stones rain at you but the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah prohibits it. According to Imām Ibn Jarīr, this part of the verse was revealed at a time when he was present in Makkah. Then, came Hijrah to Madīnah where the second part was revealed as follows: وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ (nor would Allah send punishment on them while they are seeking forgiveness - 33). It means that following his migration to Madīnah, though the preventive factor of a mass punishment stood removed as he was not present there in Makkah, yet there did remain another factor preventing the coming of mass punishment even at that time since many weaker ones among Muslims who were unable to migrate had remained behind in Makkah and they were the ones who kept praying to Allah Ta'ālā for their forgiveness. It was for their sake that punishment was not sent upon the people of Makkah.

When, even these blessed souls migrated to Madīnah, the sentence appearing in the next verse (34): وَمَا لَهُمْ أَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (And what is with them that Allah should not punish them while they prevent [people] from *al-masjid al-ḥarām*) was revealed.

The sense is that there were two hinderances to the coming of punishment. They both have been removed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was no more there in Makkah, nor there remained those forgiveness-seeking Muslims in that city. Thus, there appeared to be no hinderance to the coming of punishment. Particularly so, because the people of Makkah were already deserving of punishment for their hostility to Islām while on top of which - despite being themselves incapable of any act of worship worth the name - they had started preventing people who wished to go into *al-masjid al-ḥarām* for 'Ibādah, 'Umrah and Ṭawāf. So, at that stage, their entitlement to punishment had become mature and complete. Consequently, it was through the Conquest of Makkah that punishment was sent upon them.

The event relating to the preventing of people from entering *al-masjid al-ḥarām* took place at the expedition of Ḥudaibiyah when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had gone there with the intention of making 'Umrah with his Companions. The disbelievers of Makkah stopped him from entering the city and compelled him and all his Companions to undo their Iḥrām and return back. This happened in the Hijrah year 6. Two years later, in Hijrah 8, Makkah was conquered. Thus, it was at the hands of Muslims that punishment was sent upon them.

This explanation given by Ibn Jarīr rests on the assumption that the factor of the Holy Prophet's presence in Makkah should be considered as the hinderance to punishment while others have maintained that the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the world is itself the prohibitive factor against any mass punishment. As long as he graces the world with his presence, no punishment can come over his people. The reason for this is obvious. The state of his call to prophethood is different. It is not similar to that of other blessed prophets as they were sent to particular areas or tribes. When they left these and arrived at some new place, punishment would overtake the people they left behind. This is contrary to the case of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whose prophethood and messengership is universal until the Last Day of this mortal life. So, the place of his blessed arrival and the

scope of his mission as a Messenger of Allah extends to the whole world. Therefore, as long as he is present in any part of the world, no punishment can visit his people.

Based on this Tafsīr, it would mean that the doings of the people of Makkah demanded nothing less than that they be struck with a rain of stones. But, two things became a hinderance to this punishment: (1) The presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the world and (2) the seeking of forgiveness by the people of Makkah because they, despite being polytheists and disbelievers, used to say: غفرانك غفرانك (we seek Your forgiveness, we seek Your forgiveness) in their Ṭawāf. Though, this seeking of forgiveness by them coupled with disbelief (*shirk*) may not be beneficial in the Hereafter, but the benefit of doing that too in this world which accrued to them was that they escaped punishment in the mortal world. The standing truth is that Allah Ta'ālā does not let anyone's deed go to waste. If disbelievers and polytheists do something good, its return is given to them right here in this world. As for what is said after that - 'and what is with them that Allah should not punish them while they prevent [people] from *al-masjid al-ḥarām* - it would then mean that the absence of punishment in the world should not embolden these people to become arrogant and complacent thinking that they were no sinners or that punishment would not come upon them at all. May be, not in the mortal world, but there is just no escape or deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. Given this Tafsīr, the punishment mentioned in: مَالَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ (and what is with them that Allah should not punish them - 34) would be referring to the punishment of the Hereafter.

To sum up, it can be said that the verses cited here leave beneficial information for us: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā does not send punishment upon a locality in which people seek His forgiveness. This is His customary practice. (2) That no punishment would come upon the community of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, believing or disbelieving, while he is present among them. This is as it came to pass in the case of the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ, Lūṭ and Shu'ayb عليهم السلام. Their people were destroyed to the last person. Should some punishment visit individuals or a limited number of them, that would not be considered contrary to it - as was said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the punishment of خسف: *khasf* and مسخ: *maskh* will visit his Ummah. *Khasf* means to sink into the ground or be swallowed by it while *Maskh* means dis-

figuration and transformation into an animal such as monkey or swine. The intimation intended is that there will be those limited few individuals of the community who would be visited by such punishments as well.

As for the phenomenon of the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this world, it will remain operative right through the Last Day of Qiyamah because his mission of prophethood is operative till then. In addition to that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is alive even at this time, though the nature and form of this life is different from his previous life. Now, any effort at this stage to engage in the debate as to what is the difference between these two lives will be ineffectual and futile - because, nothing that this community of Muslims has to do in terms of its religious or worldly duties depends on it. Neither has the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, nor his noble Sahabah have liked such wasteful and unnecessary debates. In fact, they have prohibited it.

The essence of the submission is that the marvel of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم being alive in his resting place and the unbroken continuity of his prophethood right through the Last Day of Qiyamah prove that he is in this world right through Qiyamah, therefore, this community of his shall remain safe against any mass punishment until that fateful Day.

Verses 34 - 38

وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا
كَانُوْٓا اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ؕ اِنْ اَوْلِيَآؤُهٗٓ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقُوْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ اِلَّا مُكَآءً وَّ تَصْدِيَةً ؕ
فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَسَيُنْفِقُوْنَهَا ثُمَّ
تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُوْنَ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ
يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِيَمِيْزَ اللّٰهُ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيْثَ
بَعْضَهٗ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهٗ جَمِيْعًا فَيَجْعَلَهٗ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ

هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّنْتَهُوْا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّعُوْدُوْا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾

And what is with them that Allah should not punish them while they prevent [people] from *al-masjid al-ḥarām*, even though they are not its custodians. Its custodians are none but the God-fearing, but most of them do not know. [34] **And their prayer near the House was not more than whistling and clapping. So, taste the punishment, because you used to disbelieve.** [35]

Surely, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to prevent [people] from the way of Allah. So, they shall spend it, then it will become remorse for them, then they shall be overpowered. And those who disbelieve shall be gathered into Jahannam, [36] **so that Allah separates the impure from the pure, and puts some of the impure on some others, and heaps them all together and puts them into Jahannam. Those are the losers.** [37]

Say to those who disbelieve that if they stop, they shall be forgiven for what has passed (of their sins), and if they repeat, then, the precedent of the earlier people is already established. [38]

Commentary

It was said in previous verses that the disbelievers of Makkah were though deserving, because of their disbelief and denial, of heavenly punishment coming down upon them, but the presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah was a prohibitive factor against the coming of a mass punishment on them. Then, after his migration to Madīnah, such punishment would still not come upon them because of the weaker ones among Muslims who, while living in Makkah, kept seeking forgiveness from Allah.

In the verses quoted above, it has been stated that though their due punishment was advanced till later either for the sake of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or in consideration of the weaker ones among Muslims, they should not make the mistake of thinking that they are no more deserving of punishment. The fact is that their being deserving of punishment is loud and clear. Then, other than their disbelief and denial, there are many more crimes committed by them because of which punishment should be visiting them positively. The first two

verses (34, 35) list three such crimes by them.

1. Firstly, these people are themselves just not worthy of going into the Sacred Mosque and devote to acts of worship there as due - and these very people prevent Muslims who wish to go there to devote themselves to acts of worship, Ṣalāh, Ṭawāf etc. Here, the reference is to the event at Ḥudaibiyah when, in the Hijrah year 6, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had reached there with his Ṣaḥābah in order to perform 'Umrah at Makkah - and the disbelievers of Makkah had prevented him from doing so and had compelled him to go back.

2. Secondly, for no sane reason, these people assume and claim that they were the custodians of the Sacred Mosque whereby they would let anyone they permit come in and not permit anyone they did not wish to come in.

This thinking of theirs was a combination of two misunderstandings. To begin with, they took themselves to be the custodians of the Sacred Mosque although no Kāfir can become the custodian of any mosque. Then, they thought that a custodian had the right to stop anyone he wished from entering into the mosque - while, a *masjid* or mosque is a House of God and no one has the right to stop anyone from coming in it. Of course, exempted are particular situations in which there be the apprehension of someone desecrating the mosque or causing pain to other makers of Ṣalāh there. For example, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Shield your *masājid* from small children, and insane individuals, and from mutual disputations. Small children mean children who have no sense of purity or impurity, therefore, the danger of the later is predominent. Then, the same danger of impurity as well as the danger of causing pain to those making Ṣalāh exists in the case of someone insane. As for mutual disputations, it amounts to desecration of the *masjid* and is also a source of causing pain to people making Ṣalāh there.

In the light of the Ḥadīth quoted above, the custodian (*mutawallī*) of the *masjid* does have the right not to allow such small children and insane individuals into the *masjid*, and see to it that no one indulges in mutual disputes in the *masjid* - but, in the absence of such situations, no custodian of a *masjid* has the right to stop a Muslim from coming into the *masjid*.

In the first verse cited above, it has been considered sufficient to state that there was no way these people could be taken as custodians of the Sacred Mosque when the rule was that only God-fearing Muslims could become its custodian. From here we learn that the custodian of a *masjid* should be a practicing-observing Muslim, in faith and conduct. And there are some commentators who take the pronoun in: إِنْ أَوْلِيَآؤُهُ as reverting to Allah Ta'ālā which would mean: 'only the God-fearing can be the *Awliyā* of Allah.'

According to the Tafsīr mentioned immediately above, the outcome of the verse would be that those who, despite acting contrary to Sharī'ah and Sunnah, claim to be a *Waliyy* of Allah are liars and those who take such people to be a *Waliyy* of Allah are down in deception.

3. The third crime of these people, other than the filth of Kufr and Shirk which was already their way of life, was the state of their doings which were low down, much lower than the ordinary human level. A sampling of this was pointed to when it was said that the act of prayer which these people called Ṣalāh was nothing but that they would whistle with their mouths and clap with their hands. It is obvious that no reasonable person would call these acts 'worship' and 'prayer,' in fact, not even a regular human act. Therefore, at the end of the verse (35), it was said: فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (So, taste the punishment, because you used to disbelieve), that is, the denoument of their disbelief and crimes is that they must now taste the punishment of Allah. 'Punishment' referred to here may mean the punishment of the Hereafter, as well as the punishment in the present world which came upon them in the battle of Badr at the hands of Muslims.

After that, described in verse 36, there is another event relating to the disbelievers of Makkah when they collected a huge fund to raise a powerful striking force against Muslims and then spent it to wipe out the true faith and its upholders. But, what happened finally was that lost to them was not only the wealth they had pooled together but that they, rather than achieve their objective, were themselves subjected to utter disgrace.

The event as reported by Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās صلى الله عليه وسلم is as follows. When the defeated, injured and surviving disbelievers of Makkah returned from the battle of Badr back to their city, the people whose fathers or sons were killed in

Jihād went to Abū Sufyān, the leader of the trade caravan. They told him: You know that this war was fought in defence of your trade caravan as a result of which we had to suffer from all this loss of lives and properties. Therefore, we wish that we be helped by this corporate trading venture so that we can take our revenge against Muslims in the future. The people of the trading company accepted their plea and gave them a huge amount which they spent on their bid for victory in the battle of 'Uḥud. In this bid too, which was to avenge their defeat in the battle of Badr, they met a sad end and were overpowered as before. With the shock of defeat, left for them was the added remorse for having lost all that wealth they had invested in the unsuccessful challenge.

In this verse, the Holy Qur'ān has foretold the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about this event much before it took place. It said there: "Surely, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to prevent (people) from the way of Allah. So, they shall spend it, then it will become remorse for them, then they shall be overpowered -36." Consequently, this is how it happened at the battle of 'Uḥud. They spent everything they had collected. Then, they were overpowered as a result of which, on top of the shock of defeat, they were smitten by the remorse for having lost the wealth they had invested in their venture.

Al-Baghawī and some other commentators have attributed the subject of this verse to the expenses incurred on the battle of Badr itself. According to them, the thousand strong army of disbelievers which had gone to confront Muslims in the battle of Badr was already paid for. All expenses of their maintenance were guaranteed by twelve chiefs of Makkah, included among them being Abū Jahl, 'Utbah, Shaybah and others. It goes without saying that the cost of transporting and feeding one thousand men must have been enormous. This being the state of affairs, these people not only that they felt bad about their defeat, they were also extremely remorseful about having lost their wealth. (Maẓharī)

At the end of the verse (36), given there is the evil end of these people in terms of the Hereafter: وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ (And those who disbelieve shall be gathered into Jahannam).

In the verse under study, the mention of an evil end of spending wealth to stop people from following the true faith also includes the

disbelievers of today who spend enormous wealth in the name of hospitals, educational institutions and charities only to stop people from following Islām and to attract them to their call for the false. Similarly, also included here are all those who have gone astray, those who spend their wealth to invite people to listen to doubts and superstitions they have generated into the established collective beliefs of Islam. But, Allah Ta'ālā has His ways of keeping the faith revealed by Him protected. There are many occasions when it is openly noticed that such people fail to achieve their objective despite having spent huge amount of money and materials.

Verse 37 describes some consequences of the events mentioned earlier which, in a nutshell, are that the disbelievers used their wealth against Islām, then they were bitten by remorse and were utterly disgraced. This series of happenings had its own advantages which find mention in the opening sentence of this verse: لِيَمِيزَ اللّٰهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ (so that Allah separates the impure from the pure).

The two words, الخبيث (*al-khabīth* : impure) and الطيب (*aṭ-ṭaiyyib* : pure), stand in contrast to each other. The word, *al-khabīth*, is used to refer to that which is impure, filthy and forbidden while *aṭ-ṭaiyyib* set against it denotes what is pure, clean, nice and lawful. At this place, the use of these two words may be referring to the impure possessions of the disbelievers, and the pure possessions of Muslim as well. Given this projection, it would mean that the enormous wealth spent by the disbelievers was impure and filthy. The evil end it met was that they suffered the loss of wealth, and the loss of lives as well. As compared to them, Muslims spent very little of whatever they had in the name of wealth, but that wealth was pure and lawful. Those who spent it succeeded, not to mention the additional spoils of war that fell into their hand. After that, it was said:

وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضَهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ .

'and (Allah) puts some of the impure on some others, and heaps them all together and puts them into Jahannam. Those are the losers - 37'

The sense is that the way magnet pulls iron and amber pulls grass and in the light of new scientific discoveries, the system of the world is

held together by the constant of force fields pulling things together, the case in deeds and morals is also identical. They have a pull of their own. One bad deed draws in another bad deed and a good deed draws in another good deed. Impure wealth pulls in another body of impure wealth and then this heap of impure wealth generates vestiges which are equally impure. As a result of this, Allah Ta'ālā will heap all impure wealth into Jahannam and those to whom it belonged would find themselves in a terrible loss.

And there is a large number of commentators who take *al-khabīth* and *aṭ-ṭaiyyib* in the general sense at this place, that is, pure and impure. Thus, pure would signify true believers and impure would mean the disbelievers. Given this approach, the verse would mean that through conditions mentioned above, Allah Ta'ālā likes to make the pure distinct from the impure, that is, make a true believer distinct from a disbeliever and - as a consequence of which - true believers are gathered together in Jannah and the disbelievers, all of them at one place, into Jahannam.

Appearing once again in verse 38, there is a patronizing address to disbelievers - which carries the elements of persuasion and warning both. The part of persuasion is that should they repent from their shocking deeds even then, and come forward to believe, then, all their past sins shall be forgiven. If they failed to desist even then, the warning part tells them that they better understand that Allah Ta'ālā would not have to think about making some new law for them. The law is already there. It has been in force in the case of disbelievers of earlier times. The same law would come into force against them too - that they were destroyed in the present world and became deserving of the punishment of the Hereafter.

Verses 39 - 40

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلّٰهِ ۚ فَإِنِ
انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا
أَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ؕ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٤٠﴾

And fight them until there is no Fitnah (disorder or disbelief) and total obedience becomes for Allah. So, if they desist, then, Allah is indeed watchful over what

they do. [39] **And if they turn away, then, be sure that Allah is your protector. He is the excellent protector and excellent supporter.** [40]

Commentary

We are now on verse 39 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. Two words: فتنة (*Fitnah*) and دين (*Dīn*) used here need our attention since both are used in many shades of meaning lexically.

At this place, two meanings have been reported from authorities of Tafsīr from among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn: (1) That Fitnah is taken to mean *Kufr* and *Shirk*, and *Dīn* is taken to mean the *Dīn* of Islām. This very Tafsīr has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه. Given this exegetic view, the verse would mean that Muslims must continue fighting disbelievers until disbelief disintegrates yielding its place to Islām and there remains no religion and faith other than Islām. Given this situation, this injunction will be specific to only the people of Makkah and the people of Arabia - because, the Arabian Peninsula is the home of Islām. The presence of any other religion, other than Islām in it, shall be dangerous for Islām. As for the rest of the world, other religions and faiths could be kept existing as confirmed by other verses of the Holy Qur'ān and reports from Ḥadīth.

(2) According to the second Tafsīr reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه and others, Fitnah at this place means the chain of pain, retributive suffering and endless woes which the disbelievers of Makkah had always been inflicting on Muslims. As long as they were in Makkah, they kept braving all sorts of pain caused to them all the time. They could do nothing about it being virtually held by them in their clutches. When these people migrated towards Madīnah, they pursued each single Muslim and kept killing or looting them. Even after these people had reached Madīnah, the wrath and anger of the disbelievers kept showing up in the form of attacks on the whole city of Madīnah.

Set against *Fitnah*, the term *Dīn* means the state of exercising functional reach and control and prevailing over antagonists. Seen from this angle, the Tafsīr of the verse would be that Muslims must keep fighting disbelievers until fellow Muslims are delivered and secured from the tyrannies of disbelievers - and until Islām takes over so that it can defend and protect Muslims from the injustices inflicted on

them by others. An event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ also goes on to support this very Tafsīr. The report of the event says: When Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf launched an armed attack against Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضی اللہ عنہ, the Amīr of Makkah, it became a strange scene. There were Muslims on both sides and their swords were swishing against each other. Seeing this, a couple of people came to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ and said to him: Here you are watching the horror Muslims are in, although you are the son of Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضی اللہ عنہ who was not one of those who would ever tolerate such evil generating disorder. Why is it that you would not come out to remove this *Fitnah*? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has decreed that shedding the blood of any Muslim is forbidden. Both of them countered him by saying: Do you not recite the verse of the Qur'ān: قَاتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَاتَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ (Fight them until there is no Fitnah [disorder or disbelief] any more - 39)? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: Of course, I do recite this verse - and act in accordance with it as well. We continued fighting disbelievers as commanded in this verse until came the time when there remained no Fitnah anymore, and Islām became the dominant *Dīn*. Now, here are people like you who wish to kill each other and plant the Fitnah all over again, as a result of which, everything other than Allah will come to reign supreme, and that which thus reigns supreme shall be counter to the true faith, our *Dīn*. What he meant to say was that the command to wage Jihād, fight and kill, was against the *Fitnah* of disbelief and the tyranny of the disbelievers - that they had done, and continued doing so until that *Fitnah* was eliminated. Now to apply this state of affairs as an analogy to fit forms of infighting among Muslims themselves was not sound logic. In fact, at a time when Muslims fight and kill each other, the instructions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم are: 'In such a situation one who keeps sitting is better than one who stands up.'

Summarizing this Tafsīr, it can be said that Jihād, fighting and killing against the enemies of Islām was *Wājib* (necessary) on Muslims until the *Fitnah* of their tyranny unleashed on Muslims is eliminated, and Islām's ascendancy stands established over all other orders - and this outcome will come to pass only close to *Qiyāmah*, therefore, the injunction of Jihād is valid and operative right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*.

Two things could result from Jihād against the enemies of Islām: (1) That they stop being oppressive to Muslims, either by entering the Islāmic brotherhood and becoming brothers-in-faith, or by remaining attached to their religion, they stop harassing and hurting Muslims and enter into a treaty of allegiance.

(2) That they reject both options and stick to their policy of confrontation. Injunctions covering both options have been mentioned in the next verse (40). It was said:

فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

So, if they desist, then, Allah is indeed watchful over what they do.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā would deal with them in the light of their conduct. Put simply, if they desisted, Jihād action against them will be suspended. Under this arrangement, Muslims may have apprehended danger from the disbelievers. Their readiness to sign a peace pact or their declaration to have become Muslims soon after the encounter of mutual killing may have possibly appeared to Muslims as nothing but some strategy of deception usually employed in wars. In a situation like that, stopping the ongoing war could have been harmful for Muslims. The answer to this apprehension was given by saying that Muslims are bound by deeds they see outwardly. The one who looks into hearts and knows their hidden secrets is none but Allah Ta'ālā Himself. Therefore, when disbelievers declare their adherence to Islām or make a peace pact, Muslims have no choice but that they stop fighting and killing in Jihād. As for personal doubts about whether or not they have accepted Islām, or peace, honestly from their heart or all this is a cover for deception - these are things which fall in the domain of Allah. He knows it well that should they do something like that, they will be taken care of in some other way. Muslims should not lay the foundation of their matters and dealings on such thoughts and apprehensions.

If hands were raised against them after their declaration of Islām or pact of peace, those waging Jihād would turn into criminals - as it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. There, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said that he has been commanded to fight the enemies of Islām until they accept the Kalimah: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ

رَسُوْلُ اللهِ (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah, Muḥammad is a Messenger of Allah), establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh. When they have done that, their life and property shall all become protected.[1] The only exception shall be that of a punishment given to them against a crime under the Islāmic Law. What remains of the accountability of their hearts - whether they are accepting the creeds and deeds of Islām heartily or that they are doing it hypocritically - shall be resting with Allah.

According to another Ḥadīth which Abū Dāwūd has reported from several noble Companions, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whoever does any injustice to a peace pact beneficiary (a person who has entered into a pact of allegiance with the Islāmic government) or brings him any harm, or makes him do something which is more than what he can physically do, or takes something from him without his genuine, heart-felt consent, then, on the Day of Judgement, I shall support that peace pact beneficiary against a Muslim who has done something like that.

The present verse of the Holy Qur'ān under study along with reports from Ḥadīth have obviously exposed Muslims to a political danger. Think of an arch enemy who happens to be at their mercy. Just to save his life, the enemy recites the Kalimah of Islām. Right there, Muslims have been obligated to hold their hands instantly. One may think: With this style of combat, Muslims would be unable to overcome just about any enemy! But, Allah Ta'ālā has His own ways of doing things. Here, He has taken the hidden secrets of their hearts as His area of responsibility. In a miraculous manner, it has been demonstrated practically that Muslims never faced such an embarassing situation in any of their battlefields. However, there have been hundreds of hypocrites in a state of peace who cheated, passed on as Muslims, even went about fulfilling the obligations of Ṣalāh and Ṣawm at least outwardly. Some of the miserably graceless among them had no other objective in sight but that they would exact a few benefits from Mus-

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1. It should be recalled that this principle is restricted to the Arabian Peninsula, where no disbeliever is allowed to live as a permanent citizen. In other parts of the world, the disbelievers may opt for *jizyah* and may continue to profess their own religion, the punishment of their disbelief being deferred to the Hereafter. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani).

lims and remain safe from their revenge despite nursing hostility in their hearts. Then, there were some of those too who were doing so with political motives of spying on Muslims, find their secrets and maintain conspiratorial liaison with enemies. But, such was the Divine law that it instructed Muslims to treat all of them as they would treat Muslims - unless it was proved that they had themselves betrayed their hostility to Islām or contravened the peace agreement.

This teaching of Islām applied to the condition in which the enemies of Islām promise to desist from their hostility and enter into agreement to that effect.

The second condition is that they stick to their doggedness and hostility. The injunction covering this situation appears in the later verse (40) where it was said: وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ (And if they turn away, then, be sure that Allah is your protector. He is the an excellent protector and excellent supporter).

In brief, if they fail to desist from their tyranny and disbelief, the injunction Muslims are obligated with is the same as stated above, that is, continue fighting them. Since Jihād involves fighting and killing, it is usually associated with a big army, ample weapons and other hardware and logistic support. But, those days Muslims did not have much of this normally, therefore, it was possible that Muslims would have found this command to fight and kill somewhat heavy, or their lack of numbers or paucity of equipment may have led them to realize that they could not win a war like that. Therefore, Muslims were given the antidote they needed. They were told that it did not matter if the disbelievers had more men and equipment to fight with, but where in the world were they going to get the unseen support and help of Allah Ta'ālā which Muslims have with them and which they have been witnessing as being alongwith them on every battlefield. Then, towards the end it was said that, for all practical purposes, everyone in the world finds some help and support from someone or somewhere, but the touchstone of how effective and functionally superior it is depends on the power, strength, knowledge and experience of that helper or supporter. It goes without saying that a whole world-full of people could never exceed, even equal the power and strength and knowledge and perception of Allah Ta'ālā because He is an excellent protector and an excellent supporter with no one to match Him.

Verse 41

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِي
الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ
بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰى عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ ط
وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤١﴾

And know that whatever spoils you receive, its one fifth is for Allah and His Messenger and for kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, if you do believe in Allah and in what We have sent down upon Our Servant on the decisive day, the day the two forces met. And Allah is powerful over everything. [41]

Commentary

Mentioned in this verse are injunctions of spoils and the law of their distribution. Before we take up the subject in detail, let us understand some important words first.

Lexically, the word: غنیمه (*ghanīmah*) is applied to property which is acquired from the enemy. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, property which is acquired from non-Muslims through fighting and killing, truimph and control, is called: غنیمه (*ghanīmah*, translated here as spoils). And the property which is acquired in peace and with consent, like: جزیه، خراج *Jizyah, Khirāj* etc., is called: فيئ (*fai'*). These two words have been used to describe injunctions of these two kinds in the Holy Qur'ān. The present Sūrah al-Anfāl takes up injunctions relating to *ghanīmah* or spoils which is acquired from non-Muslims at the time of fighting and killing.

At this point, we should first keep in mind that, according to the Islāmic and Qur'ānic view of things, the real ownership of the entire universe belongs to Allah Ta'ālā, the one and only Being who has created whatever there is in it. The only way through which the ownership of something can be attributed to human beings is no other but that Allah Ta'ālā may have Himself declared it, through His Law, to be under the ownership of someone. For instance, while mentioning quadruped animals in Sūrah Yā Sīn (23:71), it was said: اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّمَّا عَمِلَتْ اَيْدِيْنَآ اَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مٰلِكُوْنَ (Do they see not that We created the quadrupeds

with Our Own hands then they became their owners?) As obvious, the sense is that this ownership of theirs is not private and personal - it was Allah who made them the owners out of His grace.

When some set of people rebels against Allah Ṭa'ālā, that is, indulges in Kufr and Shirk, then, the first action Allah Ta'ālā takes to reform them is that He sends His Messengers and Books to them. When the unfortunate ones among them are not impressed even by this act of Divine grace, Allah Ta'ālā commands His Messengers to wage Jihād against them and kill them. The outcome of this was that the lives and properties of these rebels became *Mubāḥ* (allowed). They no longer had the right to benefit from the assets of life and property given to them by Allah Ṭa'ālā, instead, in a manner of saying, all that belonged to them was confiscated in the name of the Authority in command. These very confiscated properties are given the name of *ghanīmah*, spoils or war booty - which went out of the ownership of disbelievers and deposited itself separately as being under the ownership of Allah Ta'ālā alone.

According to the ancient Divine Law which governed such confiscated properties, no one was allowed to benefit from them. Such properties were, rather, gathered and placed on some open spot where lightening would come from the heavens and burn these up. This was the sign that their effort by way of Jihād was accepted.

One of the few unique distinctions bestowed upon the Last of the Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم by Allah Ta'ālā was that *ghanīmah* properties (spoils) were made lawful (*ḥalāl*) for the Muslim community (as in a Ḥadīth of Muslim). And such was the quality of its lawfulness that it was classed as 'the purest of properties!' The reason for it is not far to find. Is it not that wealth and property which one acquires through hard labour comes to him under his ownership after having passed through chains after chains of transfers from the ownership of many human beings? Now, while passing through these numerous chains, there exists a strong probability of unlawful, impermissible or repugnant methods being employed somewhere in the pipeline. The case of *ghanīmah* or spoils happens to be quite contrary. Here, the ownership of disbelievers stands severed from them and passes directly into the ownership of Allah Ta'ālā, remaining there as such. Now, whoever gets it, gets it directly from what is owned by Allah Ta'ālā and that leaves

no doubt, or apprehension of unlawfulness or repugnance as could be the case in receiving from what is owned by human beings. This is like water drawn from a well, or natural grass, which reaches man directly as a blessing of Allah Ta'ālā without any human intermediacy in between.

To sum up, it can be said that *ghanīmah* or spoils which was not lawful for past communities was made lawful as a token of blessing and mercy for the Muslim Ummah. The rule of its distribution has been introduced by saying: وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ (And know that whatever spoils you receive - 41). To begin with, according to the rules of Arabic language, the word: ما (*mā*) already signifies generality. Then, to put further stress on this generality, added there was the expression: مِنْ شَيْءٍ (*min sha'i*) which means whatever is collected as spoils, big or small, falls under the purview of this very law. Anyone who takes anything outside the provisions of the law of distribution, even if ordinary or small in his judgement, he will still be considered guilty of a serious crime. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that it is not permissible for anyone to take even a needle and its thread which is a part of the spoils (*ghanīmah* property) without his entitlement to it as his legally alloted share. In addition to that, he has given a severe warning against taking anything from spoils outside the alloted share. The name given to this act of misappropriation in spoils in Ḥadīth is *Ghulūl* where it has been declared as brazenly unlawful, far more serious than common theft.

By introducing the ground rule for distribution, all *mujāhid* Muslims were served with a notice that Allah Ta'ālā has made spoils lawful for them, but that it was lawful under a specific procedural regulation. Anyone who takes anything against it, then, that will be nothing but an ember of the fire of Jahannam.

This is what makes the law of the Qur'ān distinct from other laws of the world. Then, this is the real secret behind the perfect effectiveness and success of the law of Qur'ān when it begins by focusing on the need to fear Allah and to be concerned about the Hereafter and follows it up with warnings of consequences. After that, as part of the next article, penal punishments were also promulgated.

Otherwise, it is worth pondering how is it possible in the middle of the wild commotion of the battlefield that properties be acquired from

out of the possession of non-Muslims, properties the details of which are known neither to the commander of Muslims nor to someone else. On top of that, battles are fought on grounds which form part of desolate jungles and deserts where thousands of places exist as possible hideouts far from the arm of law. To stand guard over these properties with the sole strength of law was something just not possible for anyone. Ultimately, it was the fear of Allah and Ākhirah alone which enabled every single Muslim to desist from making even the minutest misappropriation in these properties.

Now, let us have a look at this rule of distribution. It was said: فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْیَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسٰكِیْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِیْلِ (its one fifth is for Allah and the Messenger and for kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer - 41).

First of all, worth pondering at this point is that the rule of the distribution of *ghanīmah* or spoils being described here covers the distribution of spoils as a whole. But, the Qur'ān has elected to simply mention the rule as it applies to its one-fifth. No mention has been made of the remaining four shares. What is the secret behind it and what is the law which governs the distribution of the rest of four shares? If we ponder over and deliberate in the Qur'ān, an answer to these two questions comes out from within the existing word arrangement of the text. To wit, addressing Muslims engaged in Jihād, the Holy Qur'ān said: مَا غَنِمْتُمْ (*mā ghanīmtum* : whatever spoils you receive). There is a hint here to the effect that this property is the right of those who receive it. And after that, it was declared that one fifth from it was the share of Allah and the Messenger and others. Thus, the outcome is all too clear - the remaining four shares belonged to the *mujāhidīn* and to those who collected spoils among them. This is similar to what the Qur'ān has said elsewhere in connection with the law of inheritance:

وَوَرِثَهٗۤ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ

And his parents have inherited him, then, his mother gets the one-third. (4:11)

Here too, the mention of mother has been considered sufficient which tells us that the remaining two shares are the right of the father. Similarly, after mentioning: مَا غَنِمْتُمْ (*mā ghanīmtum* : whatever spoils you receive), when only one fifth share was set aside for Allah, it became

clear that the remaining four shares were the right of the *mujāhidīn*. Later, the corresponding word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم fully clarified the rule in details that these four shares were distributed over *mujāhidīn* under a specific law.

Now, let us take up the details of that one fifth share which has been clearly determined by the Holy Qur'ān in this verse. The count of words used in the Qur'ān to say this here is six. The six words are: (1) لِلّٰهِ (*lillāh* : for Allah), (2) لِلرَّسُوْلِ (*lirrasūl* : for the Messenger), (3) لِذِى الْقُرْبٰى (*lidhilqurbā* : for kinsmen), (4) الْيَتٰمٰى (*al-yatāmā* : orphans, (5) الْمَسٰكِيْنِ (*al-masākīn* : the needy) and (6) ابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ (*ibn as-sabīl* : the wayfarer).

Out of these words, the first word: لله (*lillāh*) serves as the main heading under which this one fifth shall be disbursed. In other words, the statement made is that all these disbursements are exclusively for the sake of Allah. Then, the introduction of this word at this place carries a particular wisdom of its own which has been pointed out to in Tafsīr Maẓharī. It has been said there that wealth and property coming out of *ṣadaqāt* (charities) had been declared unlawful for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his family since it did not suit his station as a prophet of Allah, and also because it was a portion taken out from the wealth and properties of Muslims at large for the purpose of making these purified. The name given to such give outs in Ḥadīth is: اوساخ الناس (*awsākhu 'n-nās* : dirt removed from people). This is not fit for the high status of a prophet.

Since this verse has also given a share out of the one fifth of spoils to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his family, therefore, it was particularly stressed that this share did not wind its way through what was owned by people, instead, it was directly from Allah Ta'ālā - as mentioned a little earlier that the property of *ghanīmah* or spoils goes out from the ownership of disbelievers and passes directly into the sole ownership of Allah Ta'ālā. Thereafter, it is distributed as a reward from Him. Therefore, to indicate that the share given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his kinsmen from the one fifth of spoils had nothing to do with charities given by people, instead, was grace and reward directly from Allah Ta'ālā, it was said at the beginning of the verse: لِلّٰهِ (*lillāh*) which means that all this property belongs to Allah Ta'ālā, really and specifically, and it will be disbursed according to His command alone on heads as determined.

So, there remain five real categories of disbursement from this one fifth - the Messenger, the kinsmen, the orphan, the needy and the wayfarer. Then, there are different degrees of entitlement among them. One marvels at the eloquence of the Holy Qur'ān as to how delicately it has described the difference in their degrees of entitlement. For instance, the intensifying particle: لام (*lām*) has been affixed before the first two of these five as in: لِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِی الْقُرْبٰی (for the Messenger and for the kinsmen) - and the rest of the three kinds have been conjoined together and mentioned without the particle *lām*.

The particle *lām* is used for particularization in the Arabic language. In the word: لِلّٰہِ (*lillāh*), the particle *lām* denotes exclusivity of ownership which means that Allah Ta'ālā is the real owner of everything - and in: لِلرَّسُوْلِ (*lirrasūl*), the objective is to highlight the speciality of entitlement since Allah Ta'ālā bestowed the right of disbursing and distributing the one fifth of spoils on the noble Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The purport of this arrangement has been ably stated by Imām Ṭaḥāwī and Tafsīr Maẓharī when they said: Though, five names have been mentioned at this place with reference to the heads of disbursement of one fifth of spoils but, in reality, the entire right of disposal rests with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who shall expend the one fifth of spoils over these five categories at his discretion. This is similar to what was said in the first verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl where the injunction about the entire collection of spoils was that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had the right to expend it where he wished or give it to whom he wished, all at his discretion.

Though, the verse (41): وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ (And know that whatever spoils you receive) by dividing the whole of spoils over five shares, declared that four of these were the right of the *mujāhidīn*, but the fifth share continued to be governed by the same injunction which had left its disbursement at the discretion of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. However, the only addition made there was that five heads of expenditure relating to this fifth share were spelt out and that it will keep revolving within these. But, according to the majority of expert scholars, it was not incumbent on him that he should make five equal shares out of this one fifth and distribute it equally over the five categories of recepients mentioned in the verse. Instead, what was necessary was no more than that he would give the one fifth of spoils within the same

five categories, to all, or to some, at his discretion.

The clearest proof of this statement lies within the words of the verse and the categories of recepients it mentions. It means that all these categories are not practically separate and detached from each other. In fact, they can be common to each other. For instance, a person who falls under the category of 'kinsmen,' could also be an 'orphan', or 'needy' and 'wayfarer' too. Similarly, the needy and the wayfarer could also be orphans, and kinsmen too. Someone needy could also have the status of a wayfarer. If the purpose was to have spoils distributed equally and separately over all these categories, then, these categories should have been such as would not admit one category of person in the other. Otherwise, it would become necessary that a person who is from kinsmen and who also happens to be an orphan, a needy one and a wayfarer too will have to be given four shares at the rate of one share for each status. Incidentally, this is the governing rule in the distribution of inheritance. Someone who has different kinds of relationship with a deceased person gets a separate share against each such relationship. Nevertheless, giving four shares to one person is something no one in the Muslim community goes by. This tells us that the verse does not aim to put a restriction of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he necessarily gives to all these categories and gives equally too. Instead, the aim is that he may give out of the one fifth of spoils to any category from the five categories specified as he deems fit and appropriate. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

This is illustrated by an incident relating to Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها. When she requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that she be given a servant to help her with home chores in view of her physical weakness, he refused to accept her request on the ground that, in his sight, the need of his Companions from the people of Ṣuffah was more urgent than hers. They were extremely poor and needy and there was no way he could bypass them and give to her. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

From here, it becomes very clear that there was no separate right or entitlement for each category, otherwise, who could have been more deserving than Sayyidah Fāṭimah in the category of kinsfolk? In brief, all this is a description of the heads of disbursements, and not a description of entitlements.

The Distribution of One Fifth (*Khums*) after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

According to the majority of Imāms, the share assigned to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the one fifth of spoils was, in terms of his august station as a prophet and messenger. This was very similar to the special right given to him that he could pick and take anything from out of the total spoils for his personal use, because of which he had actually taken certain things from out of some spoils. Then, he took care of his expenses and the expenses of his family from the one fifth of spoils. After his passing away, this share ceased to exist automatically - because, there is no messenger or prophet after him.

The *Khums* (one fifth) of *Dhawi 'l-Qurbā* (the kinsmen)

At least, there is no difference of opinion about the precedence of the right of poor kinsmen in the one fifth of spoils as compared to that of other categories of receivers, that is, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer. The reason is that poor kinsmen cannot be helped with Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt, while other categories of receivers could also be helped with Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt (as clarified in Al-Hidāyah where precedence is given to poor kins folk over other categories). However, the question remains whether or not the need-free kinsmen would be given from it. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah says: Whatever the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself used to give to kinsmen was based on two considerations: (1) Their need and poverty and (2) help and support given to him in establishing faith and defending Islām. The second cause came to an end with the passing away of the Prophet. What remained was the consideration of need and poverty. As based on this aspect, every Imām and Amīr of Muslims shall keep granting them precedence over others (Hidāyah, al-Jaṣṣāṣ). Imām Shāfi'ī has also taken the same position. (Qurṭubī)

And according to some Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*), the share of kinsmen in their capacity as being related to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remains valid for ever. Included there are the poor and the need-free all alike, however, the ruling Muslim authority of the time shall give them a share at his discretion. (Maẓharī)

The real factor in this matter is the conduct and practice of the rightly-guided Khulafā' of Islām in terms of what they did after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This author of Hidāyah

has this to say about it:

ان الخلفاء الاربعة الراشدين قسّموه على ثلثة اسهم

(After the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) the four rightly-guided Khulafā' have distributed the one fifth of spoils over three categories only (that is, orphan, needy, and wayfarer).

However, it stands proved about Sayyidnā 'Umar صلى الله عليه وسلم that he used to give out to poor kinsmen from the one fifth of spoils (deduced by Abū Dāwūd) - and it is obvious that this is not peculiar to Sayyidnā 'Umar alone, other Khulafā' would have also been doing the same.

As for the narrations which prove that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين used to take out the rightful share of kinsmen right through the later period of their Caliphate and had these distributed through Sayyidnā 'Alī as custodian on their behalf (as in a narration of Kitāb al-Kharāj by Imām Abū Yūsuf), it is not contrary to that distribution being particular to poor kinsmen. Allah knows best.

Special Note

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had himself determined the qualification of kinsmen through his deed when, apart from Banū Hāshim which was his own tribe, he had associated Banū al-Muṭṭalib too with them for the reason that they had never separated themselves from Banū Hāshim whether in Jāhiliyyah or Islām - so much so that at the time the Quraysh of Makkah had cut off food supplies to Banū Hāshim and had confined them to Shi'b Abī Ṭālib, the Banū al-Muṭṭalib were though not included under those boycotted, yet they joined Banū Hāshim in this trial. (Maẓharī)

The Day of the Battle of Badr was the Day of Distinction

In this verse, the day of Badr has been called Yowm al-Furqān (the day of distinction between the true and the false). The reason is that Muslims scored a clear victory at Badr and the disbelievers faced a disgraceful defeat. Though, this happened as a ground reality on that day, yet it was, by extension, a day of decision also, the ultimate decision between disbelief and Islām.

Verses 42 - 44

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰى وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ
مِنْكُمْ ط وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيْعٰدِ لا وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ

أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ۙ لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْۢ بَيِّنَةٍ وَّيَحْيٰى مَنْ حَيَّ
عَنْۢ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾ اِذْ يُرِيْكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ
مَنَامِكَ قَلِيْلًا ۗ وَلَوْ اَرٰىكَهُمْ كَثِيْرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي
الْاَمْرِ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَلَّمَ ۗ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاِذْ
يُرِيْكُمُوْهُمْ اِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِيْٓ اَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيْلًا وَّيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِيْٓ
اَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ۗ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ
الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿٤٤﴾

And (remember) when you were on the nearest cliff, and they were on the farthest one, and the caravan was downwards from you. And had you re-arranged it with each other, you would have deviated from the appointment. But (it happened like this) so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done, so that whoever is going to die may die knowingly, and whoever is going to live may live knowingly. And Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [42]

And when in your dream, Allah showed them to you few in number. And if He had shown them to you many in number, you would have been demoralized and would have disputed in the matter, but Allah saved (you). Surely, Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [43]

And when, at the time you met each other, He showed them to you few in number in your eyes, and reduced your number in their eyes, so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done. And to Allah all matters are returned. [44]

Commentary

The battle of Badr was the first confrontation of Kufr and Islām which registered a practical proof of the superiority and veracity of Islām, even visibly and materially. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has taken special steps to describe its details which appear in the verses cited above. Besides the many considerations of wisdom behind these details, one such consideration is to assert that there was just no possibility, either visibly or technically, that Muslims will win and that the

disbelievers of Makkah will be defeated. But, the unseen power of Allah Ta'ālā overturned all superiority of men and materials as well as its obvious causes. To give a clear picture of this event, the Holy Qur'ān has virtually outlined in these verses a whole map of the battlefront at Badr. Now, before we explain these verses, let us glance over the lexical explanation of some words.

The word: عُدْوَة (*'udwah*) refers to a side and the word: دنیا (*dunyā*) is derived from: اَدْنٰی (*adnā*) which means nearer. When compared to the Hereafter, this world of ours is also called: دنیا (*dunyā*) because, as related to the universe of the Hereafter, it is closer at hand for human beings. And the word: قُصْوٰی (*quṣwā*) is a derivation from: اقصی (*aqṣā*) which means farther.

In verse 42, death has been mentioned against life. The Arabic words used here do not carry the outward sense of death and life. Instead, meant here is spiritual death and life, or destruction and salvation. Spiritual life is Islām (belief in Allah and the Messenger) and 'Īmān (faith), and spiritual death is Shirk (polytheism) and Kufr (disbelief). The Holy Qur'ān has used these words at several places in this very sense. For instance, earlier in Sūrah al-Anfāl, it was said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ

> O those who believe, respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life. (8:24).

The life mentioned here is the real and eternal life which one is blessed with in return for 'Īmān and Islām. Now, we can move to a detailed explanation of the cited verses.

Opening with almost a cartographic view of the war front at Badr, verse 42 tells us that Muslims were on the nearest cliff (عُدْوَه دُنیا) and the disbelievers were on the farthest one (عُدْوَه قُصْوٰی). The spot occupied by Muslims was on the side of the terrain closer to Madīnah, while the disbelievers had taken the other side of the terrain which was farther from Madīnah. As for the trade caravan of Abū Sufyān, the main cause of waging this Jihād, that too was closer to the army of disbelievers which had come from Makkah but was out of the range of attack by Muslims and moving by the sea shore at a distance of three miles. The purpose of focusing on this battle plan is to say that Muslims were located at a spot totally unsuitable and wrong strategically, a spot from

where they had no chance of overpowering the enemy, in fact, no chance of even saving their own lives - because, the side of the terrain which was closer to Madīnah happened to be a big sandy patch walking through which was hard and heavy. Then, they had no access to water around the spot they were in, while the side farther from Madīnah where the disbelievers had set up their camps was smooth terrain with a supply of water close by.

Then, by pointing out to the two edges of the sides occupied by the two armies, it was made much too clear that the two forces were standing face to face, under which condition, it was not possible to conceal the strength or weakness of one party from the other. In addition to that, it was also indicated that the army of the disbelievers of Makkah was already at peace with the realization that their trade caravan had moved away from the attacking range of Muslims. Now, if they needed them at some stage, they too could come out to help them. As compared to them, Muslims were in trouble in terms of their location where they had no probability of getting support of men and materials from anywhere. Then, it is already settled, and known to every educated Muslim, that the total count of Muslim 'army' was three hundred and thirteen, while that of the disbelievers was one thousand. Muslims did not have sufficient number of mounts, nor did they have enough weapons. Against that, the army of the disbelievers was laced with everything.

Besides, Muslims simply had not embarked on this Jihād as some armed force ready to fight a war. Being an emergency measure to block the passage of a trade caravan and to lower the morale of the enemy, only three hundred and thirteen Muslims had started off ill-prepared, ill-equipped. It was only all of a sudden that there they stood having to confront a thousand-strong force of armed men.

This verse of the Qur'ān tells us that this event, though it came to pass accidentally, with no intention behind it, but the truth is that all that happens in this world, accidentally and involuntarily - though, it looks like some plain accident in terms of its level and form - is, in the sight of the Creator of the universe, nothing but the well-set chain of a formidable system. There is nothing in this system which can be called abrupt or out of place. It will take the whole system to unravel itself to man, only then, man could find out the full range of wisdom hidden be-

hind what was, supposedly, an accidental happening.

Take this event of the battle of Badr as a test case. That it came to pass in an accidental and involuntary manner had its own wise considerations as stated in: وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيْعٰدِ (And had you re-arranged it with each other, you would have deviated from the appointment - 42). It means that, had this battle also been fought like common battles around the world, fought with all possible survey of available options, mutual arguments and crisis resolutions, then, given the dictates of circumstances, this battle would have never been fought. In fact, differences would have crept in one way or the other - either, Muslims themselves would have started thinking otherwise because of their being few and weak against adversaries who were many and strong; or that both parties, the disbelievers and the Muslims, might have not shown up on the battle ground as appointed mutually. As for Muslims, they would have not had the courage to initiate action in view of their being few and weak - and the disbelievers, in whose hearts Allah Ta'ālā had already put the awe of Muslims, would have been scared to come out against them despite their superiority in number and strength.

Therefore, that formidable Divine system created such conditions on both sides as would not allow them time and occasion to think and understand. The people of Makkah were so overwhelmed by the disturbing plaint from the trade caravan of Abū Sufyān that they were ready to march out without much deliberation. The Muslims were prompted by the thought that they were going to take care of an ordinary trade caravan and not a formal armed force arrayed against them. But, Allah, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, so willed that a war starts between them so that the consequences of the victory of Islām which are to emerge from behind this war become visibly manifest. Therefore, it was said: وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا (But [it happened like this] so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done - 42). It means that, despite conditions being what they were, the war had to be fought so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done. And destined to be done was that arrayed against an army of armed and equipped youngmen a thousand-strong, a motely group of three hundred and thirteen ill-equipped and hunger-stricken Muslims - and that too out of place in terms of the demanding war front - rams

itself against what was a virtual mountain for them, then, the unbelievable happens. The mountain turns into smithereens. This insignificant group of men wins. This is nothing but an all too visible demonstration of the fact that some big power was operating behind them, something that thousand-strong army missed. Then, it is also evident that Muslims were supported because of Islām and the disbelievers remained deprived because of their disbelief, something which gave every sensible human a criterion to distinguish truth from evil and genuine from the fake. Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْۢ بَيِّنَةٍ وَّيَحْيٰى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْۢ بَيِّنَةٍ (so that whoever is going to die may die knowingly, and whoever is going to live may live knowingly - 42). It means that the loud and clear veracity of Islām vis-a-vis the falsity and horror of Kufr and Shirk was exposed for ever so that anyone who opts for destruction should do so while fully realizing the consequences of his or her action, and anyone who goes on to live should also live with full realization of the choice so made. The caveat is: Let nothing be done unknowingly and mistakenly, so be on guard.

The word: هلاكت (*halākah* : death, destruction) in this verse means Kufr or disbelief while حيات (*ḥayāt* : life) denotes Islām. In other words, once the truth has come out in the open, the probability and excuse of misunderstanding stand eliminated. Now, whoever takes to disbelief as his or her life style is going towards destruction with open eyes. And whoever takes to Islām takes to eternal life knowingly, consciously and deliberately. Then, it was said: وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (And Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing - 42) that is, He knows the secrets in everyone's heart, even the nature of everyone's belief and disbelief, as well as the due reward and punishment for it.

Mentioned in verses 43 and 44, there is particular marvel of Divine power which was designed to take place at the battle of Badr for the express purpose of making sure that none of the two armies were to put an end to the war itself by deserting the battlefield - because, it was as a result of this very war that the manifestation of the veracity of Islām was destined even as a ground reality, all earthy, material.

Such was the nature of this Divine marvel that the army of the disbelievers which was though three times larger than that of Muslims, yet Allah Ta'ālā, by His perfect power alone, made their number appear much less to Muslims so that it may not cause any difference of

opinion or sense of weakness to affect them. This event took place twice. Once, it was shown to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a dream which he related to all of them and which renewed their courage and resolve. The second time, when the two groups stood facing each other on the battlefield itself, their number was shown to Muslims as being small. The event mentioned in verse 43 relates to the dream and that in verse 44 to a state when they were wide awake.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه says: In our sight, the army facing us looked as if - as I said to the man next to me - these people would be ninety in number. That man said: No, they must be a hundred.

In the last verse, along with this, it has also been mentioned: يُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِىٓ أَعْيُنِهِمْ (and reduced your number in their eyes - 44). This could also mean that Muslims were, in reality, already few in number, thus, what was shown to disbelievers was their number as it was. And it could also mean that the number shown to them was much reduced than it really was - as it appears in many narrations that Abū Jahl on seeing the Muslim 'army' said to his compatriots: The number of these people does not seem to be any more than the number who would eat a camel as their daily ration. In Arabia of those days, the measure used to find out the number of men in an army was to first guess the number of animals slaughtered for their meals. One camel was understood to be sufficient to feed one hundred people. Right here on this battle site of Badr, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in his effort to find out the number of men in the army of the Quraysh of Makkah, had asked some local people: How many camels are slaughtered in their army camp every day? The answer given to him was: Ten camels daily. This led him to estimate the number of men in their army as being one thousand. In short, the total number of Muslims was shown as being one hundred in the sight of Abū Jahl. Here too, the wisdom of showing them in a reduced number was that the awe of Muslims may not so adversely affect the hearts of disbelievers ahead of the actual confrontation that they bolt from the battlefield itself.

Special Note

From this verse, we also find out that there are occasions when, as a matter of miracle and supernatural happening, optical observation may prove incorrect - as it transpired here.

For this very reason, the statement: لِيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا (so that Allah might accomplish what was destined to be done - 44) was repeated here. It means that the Divine marvel and the phenomenon of superimposition on optical observation was manifested for the reason that the will of Allah stands accomplished right upto the end, that is, by giving Muslims victory despite their lack of numbers and materials, the central objectives of this war, that is, the veracity of Islām and the expression of unseen Divine support, should be fully achieved and established for ever.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَإِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُوْرُ (And to Allah all matters are returned - 44). It means that He does what He wills and He commands as He wills. He can make a minority overcome a majority and weakness overtake strength. He may make less become more and more become less.

Verses 45 - 47

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا لَقِيْتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوْا وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا
لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوْا
فَتَفْشَلُوْا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيْحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ خَرَجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَّرِئَاۗءَ النَّاسِ
وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

O those who believe, when you face a group (in battle), stand firm and remember Allah much, so that you may be successful. [45]

And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you should show weakness and should lose your predominance, and be patient. Surely, Allah is with the patient. [46]

And do not be like those who set forth from their homes waxing proud and showing off to people, preventing (people) from the way of Allah. And Allah is All-Encompassing of what they do. [47]

Commentary

Qur'ānic Instructions for Success in Jihād

Given in the first two verses cited above is a special set of instructions for Muslims when they confront enemies on the battlefield. These instructions from Allah Ta'ālā are for them the master prescrip-

tion of success and ascendancy in the present world as well as that of salvation and prosperity in the eternal life to come. In fact, the secret of unusual successes and victories achieved by Muslims in all wars fought by them during the early period lies hidden behind their adherence to these very golden guidelines - and they are:

1. Be Steadfast

The Arabic word used by the Qur'ān is *thibāt* which means to stand firm, hold the ground, be steadfast. This includes firmness of the feet and firmness of the heart both because a person whose heart is not strong and firm can hardly be expected to have the rest of his body hold the ground. This is something everyone knows and understands, believer or disbeliever. Every nation of the world gives high priority to this strength in its wars because all experienced people know it well that the first and foremost weapon in the theater of war is nothing but the firmness of heart and feet. Without these, all weapons are rendered useless.

2. Remember Allah

The second principle is the *Dhikr* of Allah which is a weapon in its own right, special and spiritual, something known to Muslims only and not known to or neglected by the rest of the world. The world as we know it today would do anything to get together state-of-the-art weapon systems for their war plans, the latest in logistics and morale boosting sessions to inculcate combat firmness among forces - but, strangely enough, it is unaware and unexposed to this spiritual weapon of Muslims. This is the reason why Muslims, wherever they had to confront some other nation while following these instructions precisely as given, they were able to demolish superior forces of the adversary laced with men, weapons and war materials. As for the inherent spiritual benediction of the Dhikr of Allah, they have a place of their own in our lives, nevertheless, it is also difficult to deny its efficacy in enabling one to continue to hold on and remain standing firm on his feet. To remember Allah and to be confident about it is like a highly charged electronic energy which makes a weak person run through mountains. No matter what the odds be against, personal discomfort or emotional anxiety, this remembrance of Allah shoos all that into thin air making the heart of man strong and his feet firm.

At this stage, let us keep in mind that the time of a raging battle is

usually a terrible time when no one remembers anyone and everyone is consumed with the thought of self-preservation. Therefore, the poets of pagan Arabia take great pride in insisting that they remember their beloved even during the heat of the battlefield. To them, this was a proof of the power of heart and the firmness of love. A pagan poet has said: ذكرتك والخطى يخطر بيننا (I remembered you even at a time when spears were swinging dangerously between us).

The Holy Qur'ān has prompted Muslims to engage in the Dhikr of Allah even in this dangerous situation, and that too with the emphasis on : كَثِيْرًا (*kathīra* : much).

Also worth pondering over at this point is the fact that no other act of worship (*'Ibādah*), except the Dhikr of Allah, has been commanded in the entire Qur'ān with the instruction that it be done abundantly and profusely. Expressions like : صَلٰوةً كَثِيْرًا (making Ṣalāh much) and: صِيَامًا كَثِيْرًا (fasting much) have not been mentioned anywhere. The reason is that the Dhikr of Allah is easy to do, a convenient act of worship indeed. You do not have to spend a lot of time and labour doing it, nor does it stop you from doing something else on hand. On top of that, this is an exclusive grace from Allah Ta'ālā who has not placed any pre-condition or restriction of Wuḍū (ablution), Ṭahārah (state of purity from major or minor impurities), dress and orientation to Qiblah (facing the direction of Ka'bah) etc. in its performance. This can be done by anyone under all states, with Wuḍū or without, standing, sitting or lying down. And if we were to add to it the higher investigative approach of Imām al-Jazrī appearing in the famous collection of authentic Islāmic prayers, Ḥiṣn Ḥaṣīn, where he states that the Dhikr of Allah is not limited to the act of remembering Allah only verbally or by heart, instead of which, any permissible act which is performed by remaining within the parameters of obedience to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall also be counted as the Dhikr of Allah, then, given this approach, the sense of Dhikr of Allah becomes so common and easy that we could call even a man in sleep a Dhākir (one who remembers Allah). This is supported by what is said in some narrations: نوم العالم عبادة (The sleep of the 'Ālim is included under 'Ibādah) because an 'Ālim or scholar of Islām who lives and acts in accordance with the demands of his 'Ilm or knowledge of Islām is duty-bound to see that all his states of sleeping and waking must remain within nothing but the boundries

of obedience to Allah Ta'ālā.

In the present context, the command to remember Allah abundantly while on the battlefield may give the impression of being an addition of one more duty assigned to the *mujāhidīn*, something which may usually demand concentrated hard work. But, certainly unique is the property of the Dhikr of Allah. It does not subject its performer to what would be hard labour. Instead, it brings in a kind of pleasure, energy and taste which actually goes on to help one accomplish a lot of things one does in life. For that matter, there is nothing unusual about it as we commonly notice that people who handle hard labour would habitually take to a set of words or some beat or jingle or song and are heard humming it while working. The Holy Qur'ān has blessed Muslims with an alternate for it, something which is based on countless advantages and wise considerations. Therefore, towards the end of the verse, it was said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (so that you may be successful - 45). It means if you went on to master these two tested techniques of standing firm and remembering Allah - and used it on the battlefield - then, you can be sure that prosperity and success are all yours.

One method of remembering Allah on the battlefield is what we generally recognize as the well-known battle cry of 'Allāhu-Akbar' (the *Na'rah* or cry of *Takbīr* which is a positively voiced statement of belief in the greatness of Allah in the setting of a battlefield). Thus, saying: 'Allāhu-Akbar' is also a form of Dhikr or remembrance of Allah. In addition to this, it also includes the attitude of keeping the thought of Allah always in sight, having confidence and trust in Him and remembering Him with all your heart in it. As such, the term Dhikr of Allah includes all that.

Moving to verse 46, we see that believers have been prompted to follow a third instruction and that is: أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ (obey Allah and His Messenger) - because, help and support from Allah Ta'ālā can be expected to come only through obedience to Him. Negligence and disobedience can only be the causes of the displeasure of Allah and a certain deprivation from whatever grace could come from Him. Thus, we have before us three articles of the Qur'anic code of conduct for the battlefield: (1) Firmness (2) Dhikr of Allah (3) Obedience. After that, it was said: وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا (and do not dispute, lest you should show weakness and should lose your predominance, and be patient - 46).

Given here is a warning against negative aspects of conduct which must be avoided. As for the negative conduct which impedes successful war effort, it is nothing but mutual difference and disputation. Therefore, it was said: وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا (and do not dispute - 46) for mutual dissension and discord would breed cowardice among them and they would soon lose their image of dominance.

The verse points out to two end-products of this mutual dissension: (1) That you would become personally weak and cowardly and (2) that you would lose your predominance and turn low in the sight of the enemy. The fact that mutual disputation would make disputants appear low in the sight of others is obvious, but how does it affect one's own strength to the limit that it turns into weakness and cowardice? The reason is that, given mutual unity and trust, everyone is backed up by the strength of a whole group. Therefore, one individual feels the relative strength of his whole group in himself and once that mutual unity and trust is gone what remains behind is no more than his own solitary strength - which, obviously, means nothing in a killing field.

After that, it was said: وَاصْبِرُوا (and be patient - 46). Looking at the context of the statement, this appears to have been suggested as a successful prescription of remaining safe from getting involved in dissension and disputes. To elucidate, it can be said that no matter how united in thinking and objectives a group may be, but physical traits of human individuals remain different after all. Then, the divergence of opinion among the informed and experienced in the process of achieving a certain purpose is also inevitable. Therefore, in order to go along with others and to keep them together, there is no alternative but that one should be used to remaining patient over counter-temperamental matters of concern and being accustomed to ignoring them when necessary. In other words, one should not be so rigid and uncompromising over his personal opinion that, in the event it was not accepted, he would explode and fight. *Ṣabr* or patience is just another name for this quality of resilience. These days everyone knows and says that mutual dispute is very bad, but the master stroke of remaining safe from it - that one trains himself to become used to remaining patient over what does not match his physical temperament and that he does not worry about making people say yes to his view and see that they go by it - is something very few people have learnt to employ successfully. As a re-

sult, all sermons of unity and harmony are rendered useless. So, it can be conceded that one does not normally have the capability to make the other person surrender to his view, but two things still remain possible: (1) That he himself accepts what the other person has to say (2) and should the dictate of his reason and justice goad him not to accept it, then, the least he could still do is to say nothing for the sake of averting a possible dispute. This much is, after all, within one's power and control. Therefore, alongwith the instruction to avoid dissension and dispute, the Holy Qur'ān has also exhorted every individual of a group to observe patience so that avoiding disputes becomes easy in practice.

Also worth pondering at this stage is the statement made in the Qur'ān when it has said: لَا تَنَازَعُوْا (and do not dispute - 46). Here, it has stopped mutual disputation, not any difference of opinion or its expression. Difference of opinion which is prompted by honesty and sincerity never develops into disputation. Quarrels and disputations are generated when things go beyond ordinary difference of opinion, particularly when gripped by the emotional attitude of making the other person accept what one says and not to accept what the other person does. And this emotional attitude is what the Holy Qur'ān has eliminated by saying: وَاصْبِرُوْا (and be patient - 46). Then, at the end, by pointing out to the most sublime gain to be made from the observance of patience, it removes whatever unpalatable there may be about it. It was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (Allah is with the patient - 46). That they have the company of Allah Ta'ālā all the time and under all conditions is so great a wealth that wealths of the world and beyond, as we do or do not know, are just nothing as compared to that honour.

It was to make these very instructions become their ever-present response, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم delivered the following sermon right there on the site of combat during many a battles of Islām:

> "O my people, do not look forward to fight the enemy in a combat. Rather, pray that Allah keeps you in a state of peace and well-being. However, when the inevitable happens and you have to confront them, then, stand firm and be patient and be assured that Paradise lies under the shade of swords." [Muslim]

Another negative and detrimental aspect of conduct against which

warning has been given in verse 47 and from which abstinence has been advised is that believers should not wax proud over their strength and numbers nor should they be guilty of nursing some personal interest of theirs rather than remaining sincere to their mission at hand, because these two approaches would usually bring down great powers of the world on their knees.

Embedded in this verse, there is an allusion to the circumstances under which the Quraysh of Makkah who had marched off from their city to give military cover to their trade caravan with the heavy backing of men and materials and waxing proud over their number and strength. And even when the trade caravan had passed far beyond the range of any possible attack by Muslims, they elected not to return even then - because, they had other axes to grind by giving a little demonstration of their valour on the site of combat.

According to authentic reports, when Abū Sufyān succeeded in getting past the range of Muslim attack with his trade caravan, he sent a courier to Abū Jahl bearing the message that there was no need for him to go any further and that he should better return. Many other Quraysh chiefs had also concurred with this advice. But, driven by his pride, arrogance and the desire for recognition, Abū Jahl declared on oath that they would not return until they reach the site of Badr and celebrate their victory there for a few days.

The outcome was that he and his well-known accomplices found themselves dumped there for ever. Muslims have been instructed to abstain from the methods adopted by them.

Verses 48 - 49

وَإِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَاغَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ
النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ نَكَصَ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ
وَقَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيْءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّيْٓ أَرٰى مَالَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّيْٓ أَخَافُ اللّٰهَ ط
وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٤٨﴾ إِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ
قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ دِيْنُهُمْ ط وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَإِنَّ
اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

And when the Satan beautified their deeds for them

and said, "None of the people is to overpower you today, and I am a protector for you." But, when the two groups saw each other, he turned back on his heels and said, "I have nothing to do with you. I am seeing what you do not see. I am scared of Allah, and Allah is severe in punishment." [48]

When the hypocrites and those who have a malady in their hearts said, "The belief of these people has deluded them." And whoever places his trust in Allah, then, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [49]

Commentary

Since its beginning, Sūrah al-Anfāl has been dealing with the actual events and attending circumstances of the battle of Badr alongwith subsequent lessons learnt and related injunctions given.

One such event from here relates to the Satan who misled the disbelievers of Makkah, exhorted them to go to battle against Muslims and then he disengaged, and left them all by themselves right there in the middle of the battlefield. This event has been mentioned at the beginning of verse 48.

Did this deception of the Satan take the form of scruples put into the hearts of the Quraysh? Or, did the Satan come to them in human form and talked to the Quraysh face to face? Both probabilities exist here. But, the words of the Qur'ān seem to support the second eventuality - that the Satan misled them by appearing in a human form before them.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہما reported by Imām ibn Jarīr, when the army of the Quraysh of Makkah marched out from the city, they were terribly worried about a possible danger from their neighbouring tribe of Banū Bakr, also an enemy. They apprehended that once they went out to confront Muslims, this tribe hostile to them may find an opportunity to attack their homes and hurt their women and children there. No doubt, they had demonstrated their readiness to respond to the plaintive appeal for help made by Abū Sufyān, the leader of their trade caravan, but they were dragging their feet because of this danger. In this perplexing situation, all of a sudden, the Satan appeared in the form and guise of Surāqah ibn Mālik holding a flag in his hand and flanked by a regiment of tough fighting men. Surāqah ibn Mālik was a big chief who

controlled the tribal area from where that danger of attack was expected. He stepped forward and addressed the army of Quraysh youngmen through which he misled them in two ways. First, he said: لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ (None of the people is to overpower you today - 48). By this, he meant that he had a good idea of the strength of their adversary and he could also see their own physical and numerical superiority, therefore, he assured them that they should stop worrying, march ahead and prevail, for no one is going to prevail against them.

Then, he said: إِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ (I am a protector for you - 48). By saying this, he was referring to their apprehensions against the tribe of Banū Bakr who might attack their homes and families in Makkah during their absence. Here, he was taking the responsibility that nothing of this sort was going to happen as he was their supporter and caretaker. The Quraysh of Makkah already knew about Surāqah ibn Mālik being a known and influential personality of the area. Hearing this assurance from him, they became emotionally stable. They dismissed the threat from the tribe of Banū Bakr from their hearts and became all set to go and confront Muslims.

Thus, by employing this dual deception, the Satan drove these people to their killing field and what he did for himself is described by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words: فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَتِ الْفِئَتَانِ نَكَصَ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ (So, when the two groups [the disbelievers of Makkah and Muslims] saw each other [at Badr], he turned back on his heels - 48).

Since a force of satans had also assembled in support of the disbelievers of Makkah at the battle of Badr, therefore, Allah Ta'ālā sent a force of angels under the command of Jibra'īl and Mīkā'īl to meet their challenge. According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ reported by Imām Ibn Jarīr and others, when the Satan who was commanding his force in the human guise of Surāqah ibn Mālik at that time saw Archangel Jibra'īl and the force of angels with him, he lost his nerves. At that time, he was standing hand in hand with a Qurayshī warrior, Ḥārith ibn Hishām. All of a sudden, he tried to free his hand clasped into the hand of Ḥārith. When Ḥārith asked him as to why he was doing that, he whacked his chest with a blow and threw him down. Now unchecked, he bolted out from the battlefield. Ḥārith - under the impression that he was Surāqah - shouted at him: O Surāqah, chief of Arabia, you had said that you will support us and here

you are doing this to us in the middle of a battle! The Satan - in the guise of Surāqah - replied: إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ (I have nothing to do with you. I am seeing what you do not see. I am scared of Allah - 48). Thus, he disengaged himself from the earlier compact because he was seeing a force of angels and parted ways with the disbelievers on the plea that he feared Allah.

When the Satan saw the force of angels, he virtually saw trouble for him as he knew their power. As for his statement that he was scared of Allah, says Tafsīr authority Qatādah, this was a lie forged by him. Had he feared Allah, why would he disobey Him? But, other Commentators have suggested that his fear is justified in its own place because he is fully aware of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and that He is severe at punishment. Therefore, there is no reason for not fearing. However, bland fear without faith and obedience is useless.

Abū Jahl, when he noticed signs of weakness showing up in his army because of the withdrawal of Surāqah and his force, he tried to avert the awkward situation by appealing that they should not feel being affected by the sudden retreat of Surāqah for he had a secret understanding with Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to do that. In short, after the retreat of the Satan, what was due to happen to them did. It was on their return to Makkah that one of them met Surāqah ibn Mālik. This person scolded Surāqah telling him that he was responsible for their defeat in the battale of Badr and certainly for all the losses that followed in its wake because he had broken the backs of their fighting men by retreating from the action on the battlefield. Surāqah said: I never went with you, nor did I ever take part in anything you were doing there. In fact, I heard of your defeat only after you had reached Makkah.

After having reported all these narrations in his Tafsīr, Imām Ibn Kathīr said: It is the customary practice of Satan, the accursed, that he would cause man to become involved with evil and then leave him off in the middle of it. The Qur'ān has mentioned this habit of the Satan repeatedly. One such verse says:

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِينَ

It is like the Satan when he tells man: "Disbelieve." Then, af-

ter he becomes a disbeliever, he says: "I have nothing to do with you. I am scared of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds". (59:16)

The Anatomy of Satanic Deception and Personal Defence

There are some elements of guidance we receive from what has been mentioned in this verse:

(1) That the '*Shaiṭān*' is man's enemy who employs all sorts of tricks, guises and strategems to bring loss to him. There are occasions when he would simply inject a scruple in the heart and harass his victim and there are times when he would deceive man by appearing before him.

(2) That Allah Ta'ālā has given him the ability to appear before man in various guises. There is a well-known book of Ḥanafī jurisprudence called آكام المرجان فی أحكام الجان : *'Ākām al-Marjān fi Āḥkām al-Jānn* where it has been proved in detail. Therefore, authorities among mystic scholars who are recognized as masters in illumination (*kashf*) and eye-witness (*shuhūd*) have warned people that it is dangerous to start following a person simply by seeing him or hearing him say something without taking the trouble of finding out his antecedents and circumstancial conditions. There could be couched Satanic inputs even in what is known as illumination (*kashf*) and inspiration (*ilhām*). So, the ideal method of remaining safe against satanic deceptions is to follow Divine Revelation faithfully.

Success Comes By Actually Being on the Straight Path and Not By Simply Having Sincere Intentions

(3) That the most frequent reason why people get involved in disbelief, polytheism or other impermissible doings is no other but that the Satan, by making their evil deeds appear handsome, desirable and beneficial, turns their hearts away from truth, as it is, and its consequences, as they would be. Once so brain-washed, they would start taking their false as the epitome of truth and their loss as the ultimate gain, so much so that, very much like the votaries of truth, they would be all set to lay down even their lives for the sake of their false notions. It was for this reason that the army and the chiefs of Quraysh, when they were departing from the Baytullah, had already supplicated before it by saying: اللهم انصر اهدى الطائفتين (O Allah, help the better-guided group between the two of us) (See pages 183-184). Such was the

level of their unawareness that they simply walked into the snare of the Satan and started taking themselves to be the ones better-guided and truth-oriented and, unbelieveably enough, they would go to the outer limits of sacrificing their lives and possessions in support of their false stand - and that too with all 'sincerity' at their command!

From here we find out that bland sincerity is never sufficient unless the direction of deeds is correct.

In the verse which follows (49), mentioned there is a common saying of the hypocrites of Madīnah and the polytheists of Makkah. It was almost in a strain of combined sympathy and contempt that it was said about Muslims: غَرَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ دِيْنُهُمْ (The belief of these people has deluded them). It means that those handful of Muslims had come all the way to the battlefield of Badr to challenge an army so powerful and well-equipped as if those poor people have been deluded by their faith which seems to have thrown them into the jaws of death. Responding to them, Allah Ta'ālā said: وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And whoever places his trust in Allah, then, Allah is Mighty, Wise). The sense of the statement is that one who places his total trust in Allah never runs into disgrace because Allah is all-dominating and when it comes to wisdom, there is no plan or intelligence or insight into the future which can hold before it. In other words, those who know no more than what is material would only place their trust in nothing but the material. How would they know the secret power which lies in the treasures of the One who has created everything material. This power accompanies those who believe in Allah Ta'ālā and place their total trust in Him.

Even in our day, there are those religiously-observing and innocent-looking Muslims who would become ready targets for those who claim to have advanced rationally and intellectually and who would benignly dismiss them as old-timers who might as well be left alone. But, should such people be armed with perfect faith and trust in Allah, no harm can touch them - even if intended and tried.

Verses 50 - 53

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُوْنَ وُجُوْهَهُمْ
وَاَدْبَارَهُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿٥٠﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ

اَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيۡسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلۡعَبِيۡدِ ﴿٥١﴾ كَدَاۡبِ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۙ
وَالَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِىٌّ شَدِيۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمۡ يَكُ
مُغَيِّرًا نِّعۡمَةً اَنۡعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوۡمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوۡا مَا بِاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۙ وَاَنَّ
اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

And only if you were to see (them) when the angels take out the souls of those who disbelieve, beating their faces and their backs, and (saying) "Taste the punishment of the flaming Fire. [50] **That is due to what your hands sent ahead, and that Allah is not cruel to the slaves."** [51]

(Their way is) like the way of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them. They disbelieved the signs of Allah. So Allah seized them for their sins. Surely, Allah is strong, severe in punishment. [52]

All this because Allah is not to change a favour He has conferred on a people unless they change their own selves, and that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [53]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first two of the verses cited above is the punishment of disbelievers at the time of their death and the warnings given to them by the angels. Here, addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said that had he seen the condition of the disbelievers at that time when the angels of Allah were beating their faces and backs as they extracted their souls and telling them to have a taste of the punishment of burning in the Fire, then, he would have seen something awesome.

Some of the leading Commentators have declared this statement to be about the particular disbelievers from among the Quraysh who had come out to confront Muslims at the site of Badr where Allah Ta'ālā had sent an army of angels to help Muslims. Thus, the meaning comes to be that the Quraysh chiefs who were killed in the battle of Badr were killed at the hands of the angels who were hitting them from the front on their faces and from the rear on their backs and were killing them in this manner while giving them the dark tidings of the punish-

ment of Hell in the Hereafter.

Then, there are other Commentators who have kept the sense of this verse general in view of the generality of the words used in it. According to them, the verse means: When a disbeliever dies, the angel of death beats his face and back while taking out his soul. In some narrations, it appears that they have lashes of fire and maces of iron in their hands which they use to strike at the disbeliever condemned to death. But, as this punishment is not related to this world of elements, rather, is related to the universe of the grave which is known as *Barzakh* (the post-death---pre-ressurrection state), therefore, this punishment is not generally seen optically.

Therefore, the modality used to address the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was: 'And only if you were to see,' you would have seen a scene full of sobering lessons. This tells us that, after death, punishment is given to disbelievers while they are in the state of Barzakh, but that phenomenon is related to the universe of the Unseen (*'ālam al-ghayb*), therefore, it is not seen usually. The punishment of the grave finds mention in several other verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well, while Ḥadīth narrations on this subject just abound.

Addressing the disbelievers in the second verse (51), it was said that the punishment of this world and that of the Hereafter was nothing but what they had earned with their own hands. Since things done usually take their shape through the work of hands, therefore, mention was made of hands. The sense is that the punishment coming to them was a direct outcome of their own deeds. And as for Allah Ta'ālā, He was not the kind of authority who would bring injustice upon His servants and go about subjecting someone to punishment just for no reason.

The third verse (52) tells us that the punishment of Allah visiting these criminals is not something totally unprecedented. In fact, it is nothing but the customary practice of Allah that He would give reason and understanding to His servants so that they could act as guided. Then, all around them, they have countless things they can think about and go on to know Allah Ta'ālā and recognize His great power, and then do not stoop to the level of taking the weak ones from among His creation as His partners, associates or equals and, after that, He sends His Books and Messengers for additional warning. When the

Messengers of Allah come, they leave no stone unturned in making people understand the message. They even go to the outer limits of demonstrating the manifestations of the inalienable subdueing power of Allah Taʻālā in the form of miracles. Now, if a person or a people were to close their eyes to all these things, give no ear to any of these Divine warnings, then, for such people, there is the inevitable practice of Allah Taʻālā: That they are visited by punishment in this world too, and that they are subjected to the everlasting punishment of the Hereafter as well. It was said: كَدَأْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ '(Their way is) like the way of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them - 52.' The Arabic word: داب (*da'b*) used in the text means habit or way. Thus, the sense is that the world already knows the customary practice of Allah Taʻālā vis-a-vis the haughty and the contumacious like Pharaoh and his people and has seen its manifestation when Pharaoh was made to drown in the sea with all his power and people, and similar was the fate of those before him, the people of 'Ād and Thamūd, who were hit by many kinds of punishment which eliminated them totally. Then, it was said: 'كَفَرُوْا' (52) which means when these people belied the verses and signs of Allah Taʻālā, He seized them with His punishment because of their sins. After that, the verse ends with the statement: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ (52) which gives the reason why it happened the way it did - that Allah Taʻālā is Strong. No one claiming any kind of strength and valour can, on that basis alone, get away from His punishment. And then, certainly very severe is the punishment which comes from Allah Taʻālā Himself.

Stated in the fourth verse (53) there is a standing rule which spells out the condition under which Allah Taʻālā allows a people to continue enjoying blessings bestowed by Him. It was said: بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً اَنْعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ (because Allah is not to change a favour He has conferred on a people unless they change their own selves - 53).

The first thing worth pondering about at this place is that Allah Taʻālā has not set forth any rule as to the bestowal of blessing and favour, nor has He put any restriction and condition for it, nor has He made it to be dependent on some good deed - because, had this been so, then, the foremost favour bestowed on us is our very existence. Placed in this marvelous menagerie of the power of Allah are thousands and thousands of additional blessings which, it is all too obvious, were conferred on us at a time when we did not exist nor any of our deed did.

If blessings and favours from Allah Ta'ālā were to wait for good deeds from His servants, our being itself would have not materialized.

The blessing and the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā is there all by itself as an outcome of His being the Lord of all the worlds and the One who is All-Merciful and Very-Merciful. However, what has been described in this verse is a rule which governs the continuity of this favour and mercy. According to this rule, when Allah Ta'ālā favours a people with His blessing, He does not take it back until such time that the people themselves bring about changes in their conditions of living and ways of doing things and thus become the very agency which invites the punishment of Allah.

The change of conditions referred to here means a shift or change from good deeds to bad deeds and from good states of being to bad states of being, or that a person who, at the time of the coming of blessings, was involved in certain sins and evils, then, once he had received those blessings, he stoops lower and gets involved in deeds far more evil.

It becomes evident from the details given above that peoples mentioned in previous verses, that is, the Quraysh disbelievers and the people of Pharaoh, have their relevance to the present verse on the grounds that these people were not all that good in their states of living even at the time the blessings came. They were still the polytheists and disbelievers they were. But, after having been blessed with favours, these people became far more dauntless in their evil deeds and acts of wickedness.

The people of Pharaoh started inflicting all sorts of injustices against the Banī Isrā'il. Then they rose in hostility against Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which was a grave addition to their past crimes. Through these doings, they brought changes in their living conditions which led them to more evils and when this happened, Allah Ta'ālā too brought a change in His blessing by changing it into retribution and punishment. Similarly, the Quraysh of Makkah were though involved in polytheism and other evil practices, yet they did have a few good deeds to their credit, such as, regard for kinship, hospitality, service of Ḥajj pilgrims, respect for Baytullah etc. Allah Ta'ālā showered on them many material and spiritual blessings. On the material plane, great impetus was given to their trading activities. In a country where no trading

caravan belonging to anyone could pass through safely, their trade caravans would go to Syria in the north and Yemen in the south and return in safety and with success - something mentioned by the Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Quraysh (106) under: رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (they used to make alternate trading visits in winter and summer -106:2).

Then, on the spiritual plane in terms of their religion, they were blessed with a favour so great as was never conferred upon any of the past peoples - that the foremost among prophets, the last of the line, *ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was destined to rise among them, and Qur'ān, the last, the comprehensive Book of Allah Ta'ālā was sent to them through him.

But, these people, rather than correct themselves through gratitude and appreciation for these blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, went on to make a mess of their moral condition, making it far worse than it already was. They stopped treating their near relations well and started inflicting savage injustices against their own brothers and nephews who chose to embrace Islām. Rather than keep to their tradition of hospitality, pledges were written and promulgated that a total boycott of such Muslims be made, even to the limit of holding back the supply of food and water to them. Instead of providing essential services for Ḥajj pilgrims which they once considered to be their duty, they started preventing Muslims from entering the Ḥaram. These were the standing conditions on the ground which brought about a change in the disbelievers of Quraysh - as a result of which came the counter-change from Allah Ta'ālā. He transformed His favours and blessings into retribution and punishment, thus making them have a taste of disgrace in the mortal world too, and then, it was through the noble person sent as mercy for all the worlds that they invited their own destruction.

As based on trustworthy books of history, it has been said in Tafsīr Maẓharī that Kilāb ibn Murrah, who is the grandfather of the third grandfather of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم geneologically, was a staunch adherent of the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim and Ismā'īl عليهما السلام right from the beginning, and he retained the role of leadership in this faith, generations after generation. It was during the period of Quṣayy ibn Kilāb that idol-worship started as a practice among people. Before him, Ka'b ibn Lu'aiyy was their religious leader. He used to deliver a sermon before everyone on the day of Jumu'ah which was called

'Arūbah in their dialect and tell his audience that the last among prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم would rise from among their progeny. Everyone will be bound to follow him. Whoever fails to have faith in him, no deed of his shall be acceptable with Allah. Well-known are his poetic compositions about the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as part of pagan poetry. Then, Quṣayy ibn Kilāb used to make arrangements of food and water for all Ḥajj pilgrims, so much so, that these things continued to be within the family of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم until his blessed period. Given this historical perspective, it could also be said that the change which affected the mass behaviour of the Quraysh may as well mean that they had forsaken the faith of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim عليه السلام and taken to idol-worship.

However, a return to the subject of the verse tells us that there are occasions when Allah Ta'ālā would bestow His favour also on people who do not seem to be deserving of it in view of their deeds. But, should they start, after having received that favour, committing excesses and indulging in evil deeds more frequently, rather than turn the direction of their deeds towards correction and betterment, then, this favour is taken away from them and they become deserving of Divine punishment.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (and that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing - 53). It means that Allah Ta'ālā is the one who hears everything they say and knows everything they do, therefore, there is no probability of some error or misunderstanding in the decision He finally takes.

Verses 54 - 58

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ
فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ
﴿٥٤﴾ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
﴿٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتَ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ
وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَإِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَنْ
خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَإِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً

فَانْبِذْ اِلَيْهِمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(It is) like what did the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They belied the signs of their Lord. So, We destroyed them for their sins and drowned the people of Pharaoh, and they all were unjust. [54]

Surely, the worst of all the living, in the sight of Allah, are those who reject Faith, so they do not believe [55] **- those from whom you have taken a pledge, then they break their pledge each time, and they do not fear Allah.** [56]

So, if you find them in war, make them an example (deterrent) for those behind them, so that they take a lesson. [57] **And if you apprehend a breach from a people, then, throw (the treaty) towards them being right forward. Surely, Allah does not like those who breach trust.** [58]

Commentary

The words used in the first of the verses cited above are almost the same as have appeared a verse earlier in: كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ '(Their way is) like the way of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them - 52.' But, the purpose behind these two statements differs in both. The purpose in the first verse (52) was to state that the disbelief of those people became the cause of their punishment while, in the present verse (54), the purpose is to state that, according to the common law of Allah Ta'ālā - when the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā descend upon a people and they fail to recognize their worth and value and refuse to bow down before Him - then, His blessings are transformed into misfortunes and punishments. When the people of Pharaoh and the peoples before them failed to appreciate the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā as due, blessings were taken away from them and they were seized by punishment instead. Apart from this difference in purpose, changes have also been introduced in words used at some places which serve to release particular hints in the text. For example, in the first verse (52), the words used were: كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ (They disbelieved the signs of Allah) while here, the words used are: بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ (... the signs of their Lord - 54). Thus, by mentioning the attribute: رَبّ (*Rabb*:Lord) instead of the name, 'Allah,' hint was given that these people were terribly unjust and insensate against truth, people who would just go

ahead and start belying the signs of the very Being who was their *Rabb* (sustainer, nourisher, cherisher) under whose blessings they all, from their dawn of existence to their present condition, have been brought up.

In addition to that, in the first verse (52), said there was: فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ (so, Allah seized them for their sins) while what has been said here is: فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ (so, We destroyed them for their sins - 54). This explains the brevity in the first statement because, in the first verse, mentioned there was their being seized in punishment which could take different forms. May be, they are overtaken by misfortunes within their lifetime on this earth, or that their very existence in eliminated outright. In the present verse (54), by saying: اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ (We destroyed them), it was made clear that the punishment all those peoples deserved was the punishment of death, therefore, they were destroyed. The destruction of every set of such people took different forms. Since the Pharaoh from among them claimed godhood and his people attested to his claim, therefore, he was mentioned particularly: وَاَغْرَقْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ (and drowned the people of Pharaoh - 54). As for the forms in which destruction came upon other peoples, it has not been described here. However, details pertaining to these too have appeared in other verses where it has been said that some of them were overrun by an earthquake, some others were made to sink into the earth, or transformed into animals, or seized by wind storms - and finally, came the punishment for the disbelievers of Makkah at the hands of Muslims in the battle of Badr.

In the verse which follows immediately, it was said about the same disbelievers: اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (Surely, the worst of all the living, in the sight of Allah, are those who reject Faith - 55). Here, the word: دَوَآبّ (*dawābb*) is the plural form of *dābbah* which literally means creatures who walk on the earth. Therefore, this word covers human beings and whatever of the animals walk on the earth. But, in common usage, this word is used particularly for quadruped animals. Since they were far below animals in their state of insensitiveness, they were identified with that expression in the language. Thus, the meaning of the verse is clear - that these people were the worst of animals from among all animals and human beings. At the end of the verse, it was said: فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (so they do not believe - 55). The sense is that these

people have allowed their God-given abilities to go waste by making the satisfaction of their physical needs the very purpose of their life, therefore, having access to the refinements of Faith was just not possible for them.

Sa'īd ibn Jubayr said that this verse was revealed about six men from the Jews about whom Allah Ta'ālā has declared in advance that they will never enter the fold of Faith.

In addition to that, through this word, the aim is to grant an exemption from punishment for people who were though engaged at that time, in tandem with disbelievers, in their struggle against Muslims and Islām but the likelihood was that, in future, a time will come when they will repent their past mistakes and embrace Islām. The fact is that this is how it came to be. A very large group from among them became, by embracing Islām, not only personally pious and righteous, but rose to be - in word and deed alike - leaders among men and women of the world as heralds of moral betterment and paradigms of responsible conduct of life before the Creator.

The third verse (56):

اَلَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتَّ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَ هُمْ فِىْ كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَّهُمْ لَايَتَّقُوْنَ

(those from whom you have taken a pledge, then they break their pledge each time, and they do not fear Allah)

is about the Jews of Madīnah and those of Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr. Mentioned in the previous verses was the descent of Divine punishment on the disbelievers of Makkah in the battle of Badr at the hands of Muslims, as well as their resemblance with disbelievers of past communities. In this verse, mention has been made of the particular group of unjust people who became like serpents in the sleeves of Muslims soon after their migration to Madīnah. On the one hand, they claimed to be at peace with Muslims while, on the other, they used to conspire with the disbelievers of Makkah against Muslims. These people were Jews by religion and the way Abū Jahl was the top leader of the disbelievers of Makkah against Islām, similarly, the top anti-Islām leader of the Jews of Madīnah was called Ka'b ibn Ashraf.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced the blessed city of Madīnah after Hijrah, they saw the rise of Muslim power, were impressed, even somewhat overawed by it, but the fire of their anti-

Muslim feelings kept burning in their hearts all the time.

Islāmic political wisdom demanded that, as far as possible, the Jews of Madīnah should be engaged to go along with Muslims under some sort of bilateral treaty, so that they would not come to the assistance of Makkan disbelievers. Because of their awe of Muslims, the Jews too wished to have this very arrangement.

Towards Islāmic Nationality: The First Step

After reaching Madīnah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم laid the initial foundation of political theory in Islām. The first step he took was to eliminate prejudices of country and tribe from the Muhājirīn (Emigrants: those who had migrated from Makkah) and Anṣār (Residents of Madīnah who helped the Muhājirīn). In its place, he established a new nationality in the name of Islām. This turned different tribes from the Muhājirīn and Anṣār into brothers to each other. Then, it was through him that Allah Ta'ālā helped remove mutual differences among Anṣārs themselves which had been continuing for centuries. Thus, not only did the Anṣārs enter a new era of brotherhood among themselves, they became brothers to the Muhājirīn as well.

Treaty with Jews: The Second Step

The background in which the second political step was taken was marked by two adversaries of Muslims. The first were the disbelievers of Makkah whose tortures had compelled them to leave Makkah. The second were the Jews of Madīnah who had then become the neighbours of Muslims.

Out of these two, a treaty was concluded with the Jews and was duly documented in details. The compliance of this treaty was made incumbent on all Jews living in and around Madīnah as well as on all Muhājirīn and Anṣār. The full text of this treaty can be seen in البداية والنهاية: Al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah of Ibn Kathīr and Sīrah of Ibn Hishām and elsewhere. The most significant article of this treaty was that, in the event of a mutual difference, the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall be binding for all. There was another article there which stipulated that the Jews of Madīnah shall not provide any assistance to any enemy against Muslims, either overtly or covertly. But, at the time of the battle of Badr, these people committed a breach of trust and supported the disbelievers of Makkah by supplying weapons and other war materials to them. However, when the outcome of

the battle of Badr appeared in the form of a clear victory for Muslims and a disgraceful defeat for the disbelievers, they felt cowed down once again. They presented themselves before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and apologized for the mistake they had committed at that time and sought his forgiveness for it on the promise that they would commit no breach of trust in the future.

Because Islāmic forbearance and generosity was his way, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted to renew the treaty once again. But, these people were captives of their peculiar instinctive reflexes. When they heard about the initial defeat and loss of Muslims in the battle of Uḥud, their ambitions went high. Their chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf, himself travelled to Makkah and exhorted the disbelievers of Makkah to mount another attack on Muslims with fresh and full preparation in which the Jews of Madīnah will be with them.

This was the second breach of trust they committed against Islām. In the present verse, by mentioning this repeated breach of trust, brought into focus is the wickedness of these people, for they were the people who themselves made a treaty with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, yet they were the ones who, each time, kept breaking their pledge to abide by the treaty. At the end of the verse, it was said: وهم لايتقون (and they do not fear Allah - 56). This could also mean that, since these ill-fated people are drunk with worldly greed having no concern for the life to come, therefore, they do not fear the punishment of the Hereafter. Then, it could also mean that such characterless people who break pledges do meet their evil end in this world, yet these are the kind of people who, because of their negligence and ignorance, do not fear it.

Then, came the time when the whole world saw that these people tasted the punishment for the evil role they played. Like Abū Jahl, the chief of the disbelievers, Ka'b ibn Ashraf, the chief of the Jews, was killed and the rest of the Jews of Madīnah were expelled from the city.

In the fourth verse (57), Allah Ta'ālā has given a standing instruction to His *Rasūl* صلى الله عليه وسلم about such evil breakers of solemn pledges in the following words:

فَإِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ

So, if you find them in war, make them an example (deterrent) for those behind them, so that they take a lesson.

Here, the word: تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ (*tathqafannahum*) means to get the upper hand against them and the word: شرّد (*sharrada*) is a derivation from the infinitive noun: تشريد (*tashrīd*) which essentially means to drive out or scatter away. So, the verse means: 'If you overpower such people in a war, give them a drastic punishment which becomes an instant lesson for others - so that those who are busy bashing Islām behind the cover of such people serving as their agent provacateurs should understand clearly that there remains no alternative for them but to run for their lives. The drive of the instruction is that these people should be punished in a manner which makes an impression on the disbelievers of Makkah and other hostile tribes and sucks away any courage they may have to come back and confront Muslims in the future.

By saying: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (so that they take a lesson - 57) at the end of the verse, a hint has been given towards the universal mercy of the Lord of all the worlds. This treatment makes it clear that the real purpose of this exemplary punishment was not to take revenge or release personal anger, in fact, this was being awarded in their own interest and expedient gain whereby they may, perhaps, review conditions before them, regain some of their sanity, feel ashamed of what they did and go on to correct themselves.

The Option to Cancel a Peace Treaty

In the fifth verse (58), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been told about an important article which forms part of the law of war and peace. Here, after placing due stress on the importance of complying with the terms of a treaty, an alternative has also been laid out to cover a situation in which there may arise a danger of breach of trust from the other party to the treaty any time during its legal tenure. Given this situation, it remains no more necessary that Muslims should continue to abide by their allegiance to the treaty. But, also not permissible for Muslims is the taking of any initiative (pre-emptive action of any kind) against the other party - before the treaty has been clearly terminated. In fact, the correct approach is to pick up a peaceful and convenient occasion and let them know that their ill intentions or treaty contraventions are no secrets to them, or their dealings appear to be dubious, for which reason, Muslims shall not consider themselves bound by the treaty. Consequently, they too were free to take any action they wished to take. The words of the verse are:

وَإِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَآءٍ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ

And if you apprehend a breach from a people, then, throw (the treaty) towards them being right forward. Surely, Allah does not like those who breach trust - 58.

The sense of the verse is that taking any military initiative against a people with whom a peace treaty has been signed is included under breach of trust and Allah Ta'ālā does not like those who are guilty of *Khiyānah*, that is, those who commit breach of trust - even if this *Khiyānah* were to cause loss to hostile disbelievers, something also impermissible. However, should there be the danger of a breach of trust from the other party, it is possible to go ahead and openly proclaim before them that Muslims shall not remain bound by the treaty in future. But, this proclamation has to be in a manner which makes Muslims and the other party like-wise, on the same footing. It means that nothing should be done to create a situation in which preparations are made to confront the other party in advance of this proclamation and warning while they are caught unawares and remain unable to make counter preparations for their defence. In short, the message given is: Make whatever preparations have to be made, but do it only after the proclamation and warning.

This, then, is the justice of Islām - that the rights of its enemies who commit breach of trust are also guarded and that restrictions are placed on Muslims - not on their adversaries - that they should not make any aggressive preparations against them before having declared that they have nothing to do with the treaty anymore. (Maẓharī and others)

Fulfillment of Trust Obligations: A Significant Episode

Based on a narration of Salīm ibn 'Āmir, it has been reported by Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Al-Nasā'ī and Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal that Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ had a no-war pact with a group of people for a specified period of time. It occured to Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah that he should move his army and equipment close to those people so that his forces could pounce on the enemy immediately on the expiry of the period of their peace pact. But, exactly at the time when the army of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah was getting ready to march ahead in the desired direction, it was noticed that an aged person riding on a horse was shouting a slogan very loudly. He was saying: اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ وَفَآءٌ لَا غَدْرًا

(*Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar* - Allah is Great, Allah is Great - we should fulfill the pledge, we should not contravene it). He was saying that with the famous cry of *Allāhu Akbar* (which increased the religious gravity of the matter). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: When a cease-fire agreement or a peace pact with a people comes into effect, it is necessary that no knot be opened or tied against their provisions. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضى الله عنه was informed about it. When he saw the herald of the saying, he recognized him. He was Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn 'Anbasah, a Ṣaḥābī. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah lost no time and ordered his army to march back so that he does not become one of those who had committed a breach of trust by initiating war action while being within the time frame of a no-war pact. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 59 - 62

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَبَقُوا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾
وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُم مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ
بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِن دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ
يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا مِن شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ
وَأَنتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِن جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ
عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦١﴾ وَإِن يُرِيدُوا أَن
يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ ۚ هُوَ الَّذِي أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And the disbelievers should never think that they have surpassed. Surely, they will not frustrate (the Divine will). [59]

And make ready against them whatever you can of the power and of the trained horses whereby you frighten the enemy of Allah and your own enemy and others besides them whom you do not know. Allah knows them. And whatever thing you spend in the way of Allah, it will be paid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged. [60]

And if they tilt towards peace, you tilt towards it, and place your trust in Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing,

the All-Knowing. [61]

And if they intend to deceive you, then, Allah is all-sufficient for you. He is the One who supported you with His help and with the believers ... [62]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first of the four verses cited above are disbelievers who had not participated in the battle of Badr, therefore, they survived or there were those of them who deserted the battlefield after showing up as participants and were thus able to save their lives. It is about these people that it was said in this verse that these people should not think that they have made their escape good because the battle of Badr was Divine punishment for disbelievers and escaping from its grip was not possible for anyone. Therefore, it was said: إِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ : 'Surely, they will not frustrate [the Divine will] - 59'. It means that these people cannot outsmart the will and power of Allah by their cleverness. If He decides to seize them, they would be unable to move even one step. May be, they are seized right here in this mortal world, otherwise, their detention in the Hereafter is all too obvious.

This verse has given a clear indication that a sinner who finds himself delivered from some hardship or pain, yet he fails to repent and make amends, rather stands adamant and obstinate over his sin, then, one should never take this to be a sign of success and everlasting deliverance. In fact, such a person is in the grip of Allah Ta'ālā all the time and this respite given to him is actually adding on to his punishment and distress - though, he may not realize it as such.

Production and Supply of Military Hardware for Jihād is a Religious Obligation

Given in the second verse (60), there are injunctions relating to preparations for the defence of Islām against disbelievers. It was said: وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم (And make ready against them whatever you can - 60). Here, by placing the restriction of: مَا اسْتَطَعْتُم (whatever you can) with the need to produce and supply war materials, the hint given is that it is not necessary for your success that you go about acquiring the same quantity and quality of military equipment as is available to your adversary. Instead of that, it is quite sufficient that you put together whatever supplies you can possibly acquire. If so, the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā shall be with you.

After that, some details about the direction of these preparations were stated tersely. It was said: مِّن قُوَّةٍ (*min quwwah* : of power). It means: Collect and keep ready the power to fight. Included here is everything in the form of military equipment, weapons, means of transportation and other relevant support - and also learning to stay physically fit and training in fighting skills and strategy. The Qur'ān, however, does not mention the weapons commonly used during those days at this place. Instead, by using the general word, '*quwwah*' or power, it has pointed out in the direction that this power could be different in terms of every age, country or area. The weapons of those days were arrows, swords and spears. Then came the age of guns and cannons and now is the time of bombs and rockets (and what not). The word: '*Quwwah*' or power used here covers everything. Therefore, Muslims of today should acquire nuclear capability as far as they can - and tanks and fighter planes and submarines - because all these are included within the sense of this very 'Quwwah' or power. It should also be borne in mind that should we need to learn any art or science to achieve this end and if such effort be made with the intention that it will be employed to defend Islām and Muslims and to meet any aggressive challenges from the disbelievers - then, that too will fall under the procedure of Jihād and will carry reward.

After having mentioned the word: 'Quwwah' (power) in a general sense, also mentioned there was a particular form of power in clear terms by saying: مِن رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ (and of the trained horses). The word: رباط (*Ribāṭ*) is used in its sense as a verbal noun as well as in the sense of: مربوط (*marbūṭ*). Taken in the first sense, it would mean to tie horses and in the second, tied horses. The outcome of both is the same, that is, to breed, break and train horses and hold them tied in readiness with the intention of using them in Jihād, or to assemble together a collection of such trained horses. Out of the supplies needed in a war, horses were mentioned particularly for the reason that those were times when the most effective mode of winning a war against countries and peoples of that period was no other but horses. Even today, there are inaccessible areas which cannot be overtaken without horses. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Allah Ta'ālā has placed *barakah* on the forehead of horses.

There are other sound Aḥādīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه

وسلم has declared the efforts to procure and assemble war materials and the learning of the ability to use them efficiently to be a great act of *'Ibādah* deserving supreme rewards from Allah. Similarly, equally great returns have been promised for making and shooting arrows.

And since the real purpose of Jihād is to protect and defend Islām and Muslims - and defence as conceived in every period of time and by every set of people remains different - therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: جَاهِدُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ وَاَلْسِنَتِكُمْ (Carry out Jihād against the Mushriks with your belongings, and your ownselves and your eloquence (of speech or writing). (Ḥadīth reported by Abū Dāwūd and An-Nasā'ī and Ad-Dārimī from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه)

This Ḥadīth tells us that the way Jihād - defensive or initiated - is waged with weapons, it is also carried out at times with the power of speech, and the Jihād carried out with the power of pen or writing is governed by the same injunction which governs speech. When Islām and Qur'ān are defended through the medium of speech or writing against attacks from the forces of disbelief and atheism, or from agents of disinformation, distortion and interpolation, that too is included in Jihād as based on this clear and definitive textual authority of the Qur'ān (*Naṣṣ*).

After having given the command to make war materials ready for use, also described there was the wisdom of assembling these materials together - and its real purpose - in the following words: تُرْهِبُوْنَ بِهٖ عَدُوَّ اللّٰهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ (whereby you frighten the enemy of Allah and your own enemy - 60). It means that the real purpose of acquiring and storing military hardware, whether for initiated action or defence, is not to indulge in an exercise of killing and being killed. The purpose, in fact, is to bring down the force of Kufr and Shirk and fill the hearts of their protagonists with awe so that they stay suppressed. On occasions, that can be done by the power of the spoken or the written word only. Then, there are other occasions when fighting and killing become necessary. So, defence is obligatory (*farḍ*) as dictated by the prevailing condition.

Then it was said that Muslims do know some of those people who are to be impressed with preparations and readiness for combat - and these are people engaged in an ongoing confrontation with Muslims, that is, the disbelievers of Makkah and the Jews of Madīnah. Then, there were other people too, those whom the Muslims did not know

yet. The reference here is to the disbelievers and polytheists of the whole world who had not come up against Muslims, yet in future, they too were to clash against them. This verse of the Holy Qur'ān has told Muslims clearly that, in case they do make full preparations to fight against their present adversary, it will not only cow them down but will also cast its shadows over disbelievers living in distant lands, as it did happen in the case of Cyrus and Ceaser and others of those days. They all were deterred and suppressed during the age of the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* of Islām.

It goes without saying that the process of putting war materials together and fighting a war has to be backed financially and when it comes to actual production or procurement of military support, that too can be made available through investment of money. Therefore, at the end of the verse, the great merit and reward of spending wealth in the way of Allah has been described by saying that 'the return for whatever you spend in the way of Allah shall be given to you in full.' There are times when this return is received in the form of war spoils right here in this mortal world as well, otherwise, the return to be received in the Hereafter stands already determined - and, as obvious, that is more praiseworthy.

The third verse (61) takes up injunctions of peace and aspects related to it. It was said: وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا (And if they tilt towards peace, you tilt towards it). The word: سَلم (*salm*) with *fatḥa* on *sīn*, or: سِلم (*silm* with *kasrah* on *sīn* are both used in the sense of peace. The meaning of the verse - as fairly evident from the translation - is that should the disbelievers incline towards peace on some occasion, you too should incline towards it. At this point, it should be borne in mind that the imperative form has been used here to carry the sense of choice. Thus, the intended sense is that at a time when disbelievers are inclined towards peace, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم also has the choice of making peace, if he feels peace is in the best interest of Muslims.

And the restriction of: إِنْ جَنَحُوا (if they tilt) tells us that peace can be made only when the desire to have peace comes from the disbelievers - because, should Muslims themselves start proposing peace without their desire to have it, then, this would be taken as a sign of their weakness.

However, should there arise a situation in which Muslims are to-

tally encircled and find no way out except a peace for security deal, then, initiating a peace proposal is also permissible as ruled by Muslim jurists and as proved through hints given in the directives of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah (*nuṣūṣ*).

And since the proposal of peace initiated by the enemy does have the probability that they might use it as a strategy of deceit, make them negligent and then make a surprise attack, therefore, at the end of the verse, the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was: وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ (and place your trust in Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing - 61). It means that Allah Ta'ālā hears what they say and also knows the intentions and designs concealed in their hearts. He is sufficient to help you, therefore, do not base your decisions to do things on such probabilities which cannot be proved. The safest policy was to entrust all such apprehensions and scruples with Allah.

After that, in the fourth verse (62), the same subject has been taken up with added clarity where it was said:

وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْٓا اَنْ يَّخْدَعُوْكَ فَاِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللّٰهُ هُوَالَّذِيْٓ اَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

And if they intend to deceive you, then, Allah is all-sufficient for you. He is the One who supported you with His help and with the believers.

It means that should this very probability turn out to be the reality on the ground - that their intention is bad and they stop at nothing short of a deceptive strike against you - even then, you do not have to bother about it because Allah is sufficient as your supporter. This has been true earlier too. Things have worked for the Holy Prophet ﷺ with nothing but the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. He was always there behind him, a fact which is the very basis of his victory and success. Then, it was for everyone to witness that He made a group of Muslims rise around him who became his helping hands in the mission. All these arrangements were the outward causes of the phenomena. The thing to believe is that the real and absolute Master who fused together all causes of victory and success in a visible form shall never leave him alone to be deceived by the enemy even today. It was under this Divine promise when, after the revelation of this verse, it never happened throughout the entire span of his life that any deceit or ambush from his enemies brought any harm to him. Therefore, the scholars of

Tafsīr have said that this promise for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is very much like the promise made in: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ (and Allah shall keep you protected from the people - 5:67) when, after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked his noble Companions who guarded him against any such dangers that they should now feel relieved and forget about their security concerns regarding his person. This tells us that this promise was special to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Bayān al-Qur'ān) As for others, they should do things in terms of formal arrangements after assessing prevailing conditions.

Verses 63 - 66

وَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ لَوْ اَنْفَقْتَ مَافِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مَّآ اَلَّفْتَ
بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾
يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾
يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ۭ اِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ
عِشْرُوْنَ صٰبِرُوْنَ يَغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا
اَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ اَلْئٰنَ خَفَّفَ
اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ
صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفَيْنِ
بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

... and united their hearts. Had you spent all that is on earth, you would have not united their hearts. But Allah did unite their hearts. Surely, He is Mighty, Wise. [63]

O Prophet, Allah is sufficient for you, and the believers who followed you. [64]

O Prophet, rouse the believers to fight. If there are twenty among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one hundred among you, they will overcome one thousand of those who disbelieve, for they are a people who do not understand. [65]

And Allah has made it easy on you and He knew that there is weakness in you. So, if there are one hundred

among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one thousand among you, they will overcome two thousand by the will of Allah. And Allah is with the patient. [66]

Commentary

The first (63) of the four verses from Sūrah Al-Anfāl cited above describes the cause of Muslim victory and the method through which it was achieved. In the verse appearing previous to it (62), the address was to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he was told that it was but Allah who had helped him in His own special way, and through the community of Muslims with him. This verse is telling us that help from the community of Muslims can only be made available when this community is mutually in agreement with each other and united as one. Thus, the power and weight it carries emerges to the measure of cohesion and unity it has. If relationship based on mutual unity is strong, the whole community is strong and if this mesh of relationships is loose, the whole community turns incoherent and weak. In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned his particular blessing which was bestowed on common Muslims for their help and support to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whereby their hearts were filled with perfect unity and love. Though, before the migration of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Madīnah, deadly wars had been fought between two of their tribes, Aws and Khazraj. As for mutual disputes, they were a regular feature of their lives. But, it was the *barakah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah Ta'ālā made sworn enemies loving brothers to each other. So, the real cause of the establishment and survival of the new Islāmic state at Madīnah and that of its dominance over enemies was nothing but the help and support given by Allah Ta'ālā - and the apparent cause was the mutual love and unity among Muslims.

Alongwith it, also made clear in this verse is the fact that uniting the hearts of different people and infusing them with love and concern for each other is something beyond human control. This can be done only by Him who has created all. If someone were to spend the entire wealth of the world to make this happen by creating love in the hearts of people who hate each other, even then, this feat shall remain beyond his reach and control.

Real and Lasting Unity among Muslims depends on Obedience to Allah Ta'ālā

This also tells us that uniting the hearts of people and making them mutually filled with love for each other is a blessing from Allah and it is also obvious that this blessing cannot be hoped for in the presence of disobedience to Allah Ta'ālā, in fact, for any hope to have His blessing, obedience to Him and the seeking of His pleasure are binding conditions.

No sensible person from any religion or community would differ about unity among individual and social groups as being commendable and beneficial. Therefore, everyone who is concerned about reforming people puts stress on uniting them together. But, the world at large (as we have found it and fashioned it) is unaware of the reality of things - that full and lasting unity cannot be forged and received on an assembly line through pragmatic designs. This can be achieved only through obedience to Allah Ta'ālā and the seeking of His pleasure. The Holy Qur'ān has pointed out to this reality in several verses. For instance, at one such place, it was said: وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (Hold the cord of Allah firmly, all of you, and do not be divided - 3:103). Given here is the method of avoiding differences and dissensions. The method is that everyone should firmly hold on to the cord of Allah - the Qur'ān or the Sharī'ah of Islām - and, as a result, everyone shall stand united together all by themselves and all mutual differences would evaporate from the scene. As for the normal difference of opinion, that is something else. If it remains within its limits, it never becomes the cause of dissensions and disputes. Dispute and disorder erupt only when the limits of Sharī'ah are crossed. In our day, everyone loves to harp on unity. But, the meaning of unity everyone is fond of taking is: If people agree to what I say, everyone will stand united. And others too who are equally concerned about unity would very much like them to agree to what they say, and thus claim that this is the only way for all to be united. Although, when a normal difference of opinion is inevitable, even necessary, among reasonable and honest people, then, it is evident that should everyone make his or her agreement with the other person depend on the eventuality that the other person agrees to what he or she says, then, mutual unity cannot materialize until the Day of Doom. Instead of all that, there is just no sound and natural format of unity other than that which has been given by the Holy

Qur'ān - that both parties sit together and agree to what a third party has to say, and this third party has to be the one about whom it is certain that the decision of this party will be free of error. It goes without saying that Allah alone can be such a decision-maker. It is for this reason that, in the present verse, it has been advised that everyone should hold on to the cord of Allah firmly and jointly whereby mutual disputes will evaporate in thin air and perfect unity shall prevail.

In Sūrah Maryam, it was said: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وُدًّا (Surely, among those who believe and do good deeds, the All-Merciful [Allah] generates love - 19:96). This verse makes it clear that the real method through which hearts shall be filled with genuine love and intense fellow feeling is adherence to the dictates of Faith and insistence on doing what is good and right. Without it, even if some kind of unity could be artificially arrived at, that 'unity' will be simply baseless and weak making it disintegrate at the slightest provocation or pressure - something commonly noticed in the experiences of peoples around the whole world. In short, for our instant purpose, this verse explains how the blessing which was bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - a blessing which was to generate mutual love into the hearts of all tribes of Madīnah making them all set to help and support the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - went on to turn his supporters into an iron wall for him.

In the second verse (64) as well, by stating the same subject briefly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by telling him that sufficient for him is Allah Ta'ālā in the real sense, and the group of believers in the physical sense. So, he should have no fear of an enemy, no matter how big, strong, numerous or well-equipped. Commentators have said that this verse was revealed before actual fighting started in the battle of Badr so that Muslims, small in numbers and virtually unequipped, would not be overawed by the heavy numerical and technical superiority of their adversary.

Mentioned for Muslims in the fourth (65) and fifth (66) verse, there is a law of war which stipulates the limit to which it was obligatory (*farḍ*) for them to stand resolutely against their adversary - and any retreat from which was a sin. In previous verses and events, it has been mentioned in detail that the unseen help of Allah Ta'ālā is with Muslims for their matter is different, not like that of the peoples of the

world at large. They, even if small in numbers, can overcome a lot more of their challengers as stated in the Holy Qur'ān:

كَمْ مِّنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيْلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيْرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ

> There are many smaller groups which overcome larger groups with the will of Allah - 2:249).

Therefore, ten Muslims were declared to be equal to one hundred men in the first Jihād of Islām at the famous battle of Badr where the command given was:

وَإِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ .

> If there are twenty among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one hundred among you, they will overcome one thousand of those who disbelieve - 8:65

The style of expression used here is that of a welcome news flash - that one hundred Muslims shall overcome one thousand disbelievers. But, the purpose is to order that it is not permissible for one hundred Muslims to run against one thousand disbelievers. The wisdom behind using the style of news is to make the hearts of Muslims become strong with this glad tidings telling them that Allah is promising their safety and victory. Had this order been announced in the imperative mood as a law, it would have naturally weighed heavy on temperaments.

The encounter at Badr was the very first battle Muslims had ever fought. At that time, they were in a terrible condition. The total number of Muslims itself was insignificant. Then, all of them had not gone to the war front. The hard fact was that only those who could get ready on the spot were the ones who became the 'army' of this war. Therefore, in this Jihād, one hundred Muslims were commanded to confront one thousand disbelievers in a style which carried the promise of Divine help and support.

In the fourth verse (66), by abrogating this injunction for future, the second injunction given was:

اَلْـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَ عَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفَيْنِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ .

> Now Allah has made it easy on you and He knew that there is

weakness in you. So, if there are one hundred among you, who are patient, they will overcome two hundred - 8:66.

Here too, the purpose is to order that it is not permissible for one hundred Muslims to avoid fighting against two hundred disbelievers. It will be recalled that, in the first verse (65), the avoidance of one Muslim to fight against ten was declared to be forbidden. Here, in this verse (66), the avoidance of one against two was all that remained forbidden. And this is the last and final injunction which is operative for ever and shall continue as such.

Here too, the command does not appear in the usual style of a command. Instead, the manner used is that of glad tidings which indicates that asking one Muslim to go out and stand firm against two disbelievers was, God forbid, no injustice or coercion. To be honest, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself placed in a Muslim person - because of his 'Īmān or Faith - a special power that one of them turns out to be equal to two.

But, at both places, the glad tidings about this support and victory has been made subject to the condition that these Muslims should be observers of patience and fortitude. It is obvious that standing steadfast while endangering one's dear life in fighting and killing on a battlefield is a feat which can be performed only by a person whose 'Īmān is perfect - because, perfect 'Īmān generates enthusiasm for surrendering one's life in the way of Allah and this enthusiasm multiplies his combat strength a lot more.

Towards the end of the verse, it was in the manner of a general principle that it was stated: وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (And Allah is with the patient - 66). Included here, there are those who remain steadfast in the battlefield as well as those who keep following the usual injunctions of the Sharī'ah strictly. The promise of Divine company stands good for all of them and in this state of His being with one and all of them lies the real secret of their victory - because,whoever has the good fortune of having the company of the Absolute Master simply cannot be moved away from the station of duty by anyone, not even by the whole world in unison.

Verses 67 - 69

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهٗٓ اَسْرٰى حَتّٰى يُثْخِنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ

تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ
﴿٦٧﴾ لَّوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

It is not for a prophet that there remain prisoners with him until he has had a thorough blood-shed in the land. You want things of this world while Allah wants the Hereafter (for you). And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [67] **Had there not been a writ from Allah which came earlier, there would have reached you, for what you took, a great punishment.** [68]

So, eat of the spoils you have got, lawful and pure, and fear Allah. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [69]

Commentary

The verses cited above relate to a particular event of the battle of Badr. Therefore, prior to an explanation, it is necessary to describe this event on the authority of sound and authentic narrations appearing in Ḥadīth.

The scenario of the event is the battle of Badr. It was the first Jihād in Islām, and it had come up all of a sudden. Until then, the detail of injunctions pertaining to Jihād was not revealed. There were questions. If spoils come on hand during Jihād, what should be done with it? If enemy soldiers fall under your control, whether or not it is permissible to arrest them? And if they are arrested, what should be done with them?

The law of spoils operative in the religious codes of past prophets was that it was not lawful for Muslims to use them for their benefit. Instead, the injunction was that the entire spoils be collected and placed in some open field. According to a Divine practice, a fire would come from the skies and burn the whole thing. This was taken to be a sign that the particular Jihād was approved of. If the fire from the skies did not come to burn the spoils, it was taken to be a sign that there was some shortcoming in the Jihād effort because of which it was considered unacceptable with Allah.

According to narrations in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'I have been blessed with five things which were not bestowed on any prophet before me.' One of these was that spoils acquired from disbelievers was not lawful for anyone, but it was made lawful for the Muslim Ummah, the traditional recepient of mercy from Allah. That the property of spoils was particularly lawful for this Ummah already existed in the infinite knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, but no revelation attesting to its being lawful had been sent to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم until the event of the battle of Badr referred to above. And what happened in the battle of Badr was that Allah Ta'ālā blessed Muslims with an extraordinary victory which was totally beyond their imagination. The enemy also left behind its belongings which fell into the hands of Muslims as spoils. Then they took seventy of their big chiefs as prisoners. But, the necessary clarification of whether or not the later two actions were permissible was yet to come through a Divine revelation.

Therefore, this hasty action taken by the noble Companions was censured. This censure and displeasure was demonstrated through a revelation in which Muslims were given a choice between two courses of action in the case of the prisoners of war. But, when giving this choice, it was also pointed out to them that, out of the two aspects of the case, one was desirable while the other was undesirable. Based on a narration from Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported in Jāmi' Tirmidhī, Sunan al-Nasā'ī and Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān that on this occasion Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl al-Amīn came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and communicated to him the command that he should give his Companions a choice between two courses of action: (1) That they either kill these prisoners and destroy the image of enemy power for ever; (2) or, that they are released against some payment of *fidyah* (ransom). However, should this second option be taken, it has to be borne in mind that it stands Divinely ordained that, in return for this next year, the number of Muslims who will fall as martyrs will match the number of prisoners who will be released today on payment of ransom. Though, the two courses of action did have the element of choice and the Companions did have the option of going by any one of the two, but, in the second option where mention was made of the eventuality of the martyrdom of seventy Muslims, there did exist a delicate indication towards the undesirability of the second option in the sight

of Allah Ta'ālā - because, had it been desirable, the killing of seventy Muslims would have not been binding as a result.

When these two alternatives were presented before the Companions as a matter of choice for them, some of them thought if these people were released against payment of ransom, it was quite possible that they all, or some of them, may become Muslims at some later stage which would, then, be the real gain, and the very objective of Jihād itself. They also thought that Muslims were poor at that time and should they make some financial gain through ransom for seventy men, that would not only help remove their hardship but also contribute towards their preparations for Jihād in future. As for the martyrdom of seventy Muslims, it was a standing blessing and good fortune for Muslims themselves. Why should they worry about something so welcome, they thought. It was in view of these thoughts that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ and most of the Companions tilted towards the option of releasing the prisoners against ransom. Only Sayyidnā 'Umar, Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh and some other Companions رضی اللہ عنہم differed with this opinion and recommended the option of killing them all on the ground that it was a good chance as all Quraysh chiefs, who sponsor and supply the entire striking force arrayed against Muslims, had fallen into their hands at one given time. That they would embrace Islām in the near future was a figment of their imagination. However, what was more likely to happen was that these people, once they return, will become the cause of enhanced hostility against Muslims, much too pronounced than ever before.

As for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, he had come to grace this mortal world as the universal messenger of mercy - and was himself mercy personified - he looked at the two opinions from the Ṣaḥābah and accepted the one which provided mercy and ease for prisoners - that they be released against ransom. Addressing Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, he said: لو اتفقتما ما خالفتکما (Had you two agreed upon any one opinion, I would have not acted against the opinion given by you two). (Maẓharī) Faced with a difference of opinion at that time, it was but the dictate of his inherent mercy and affection he had for the creation of Allah that the course of ease and convenience was taken to in their case. So, that was what was done. And the outcome was that next year, at the time of the battle of 'Uḥud,

the event of the martyrdom of seventy Muslims came to pass as Divinely indicated.

In the words: تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا (You want things of this world - 67), the address is to the noble Companions who had suggested release for ransom. This verse tells them that they had given improper advice to the *Rasūl* of Allah because it did not match with the august station of any prophet that he would not, once he overpowers the enemies, go on to demolish their power and its image, instead, would opt for granting relief to a wicked and conspiratorial enemy only to commit Muslims to everlasting trouble.

The words used in this verse are: حَتَّىٰ يُثْخِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ (until he has had a thorough blood-shed in the land - 67). Lexically, the word: اثخان (*ithkhān*) means to demolish someone's might and power exhaustively and conclusively. The words: فِي الْأَرْضِ (*fi 'l-arḍ* : in the land) have been made to follow in order to intensify this very sense of total termination.

As for the Ṣaḥābah who had recommended release against ransom, part of their view was, no doubt, purely religious - they hoped that, once free, these people may embrace Islām. But, alongwith it, part of it was motivated by personal interest as well - that they will have spoils to bring back - although, until that time, there was no decisive textual authority which proved spoils as permissible property for Muslims. Therefore, in view of the high standards being set for the society of men and women under the education, training and guidance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - standards which aimed to take them to ranks even higher than angels - the slightest turn of thought towards material acquisitions was considered a kind of disobedience. Thus, it goes without saying that the sum total of what is a potpurri of deeds which are both permissible and impermissible will, after all, be called impermissible. Therefore, such conduct from the Ṣaḥābah met with displeasure and it was said: تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ : 'You want things of this world while Allah wants the Hereafter (for you) - 67,' that is, Allah wants you to seek the Hereafter. Mentioned here as reprimand was a particular act of theirs which was the cause of displeasure. The other cause, that of the hope of released prisoners becoming Muslims, was not mentioned here. This indicates that a special group like the group of righteous, sincere and noble Ṣaḥābah would accomodate such mixed up intention as would combine some faith and

some personal interest was something not acceptable even in that degree. Worth noticing here is the fact that the admonition and warning in this verse are being addressed to the noble Ṣaḥābah. Though, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too, by accepting their opinion, had gone along with them in a certain way, but, this act of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was purely a demonstration of his being universally merciful when he, subsequent to a difference of opinion among the Ṣaḥābah, had gone by a course of action which promised grace and convenience for the prisoners.

At the end of the verse, by saying: وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And Allah is Mighty, Wise - 67), it was pointed out that Allah Taʻālā, being the source of all might and wisdom, would have - only if they had not acted in a hurry - provided for them wealth and properties as well in their future victories through His infinite grace.

The second verse (68) is also a supplement to this admonition where it has been said that had it not been for a Divine writ already established, the course of action which you opted for - that of releasing the prisoners against ransom - would have brought upon you some grave punishment.

What is this writ and what does it mean? According to a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, reported in Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Spoils were not lawful for any community before you. When, on the occasion of Badr, Muslims went after collecting spoils - though, spoils were not made lawful for them until that time - this verse was revealed. It emphasized that this initiative taken by Muslims, before the injunction making spoils lawful for them was revealed, was a sin which deserved instant punishment. But, since the writ of Allah that spoils shall be made lawful for this community was already there in the Preserved Tablet, therefore, punishment was not sent over Muslims for this misconduct. (Maẓharī)

It appears in Ḥadīth narrations that, subsequent to the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The Divine punishment was almost about to descend when Allah, in His grace, held it back and had this punishment come, no one except ʻUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and Saʻd ibn Muʻādh رضى الله عنهما would have remained safe from it. This tells us that the cause of Divine admonition was the act of releasing prisoners against ransom - and, in the light of the narra-

tion from Tirmidhī mentioned earlier, the reason seems to be the act of collecting spoils. But, there appears to be no contradiction between the two. Taking ransom from prisoners is also nothing but a part of spoils.

Ruling 1: In the verse under discussion, admonition came upon releasing prisoners against ransom or collecting spoils, warning of Divine punishment was given, then came forgiveness. But, what remained still not clear was the future course Muslims would be required to take in such matters. Therefore, in the next verse (69), the matter relating to spoils was made all too clear by saying: فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ (So, eat of the spoils you have got), that is, it has been made lawful for you in the future. But, even now, there remains a doubt to the effect that the injunction making spoils lawful had come at the present stage, however, spoils which had been collected in error before the coming of this injunction may contain some element of undesirability in it. Therefore, by saying: حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا (lawful and pure - 69) soon after it, even this doubt was removed. It means: Though, taking the initiative in collecting spoils, before the revelation of Divine guideline, was not correct - but now that the injunction making spoils lawful has been revealed, all that has been collected earlier is also lawful without any shade of repugnance or reprehensibility (*karāhah*) in it.

Ruling 2: At this point, worth notice and retention is a principle of Islāmic jurisprudence: When some impermissible initiative is regularized through a standing verse, no effect of the previous initiative remains operative therein. The property becomes lawful and pure - as it happened here. But, there is a corresponding instance relevant to what has been stated above. Take a case in which there was an injunction already revealed, but its revelation did not seem to affect the initiators of an action, based on which they went on to contravene it. It was later on that they found out that the particular deed of theirs was contrary to such and such injunction of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Then, in such a situation, after the coming of the injunction, that property does not remain lawful - even though the previous error is forgiven. (Nūru 'l-Anwār, Mullā Jīwan) However, in the present verse, spoils have, no doubt, been declared to be lawful and pure, but the restriction imposed at the end of the verse was: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (and fear Allah. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 69). The hint given here is that, though spoils have been made lawful, but that too has been made

lawful under a particular law. Taking against that law or taking more than due shall not still be permissible.

There were two matters in question here: (1) Spoils (2) Release of prisoners against ransom. The first problem was resolved clearly by the present verse, but the other matter was yet to be cleared. Regarding this, the following verse of Sūrah Muḥammad was revealed:

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثْخَنتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا .

> So, when you confront those who disbelieve at war, then keep beheading them until when you have had a thorough bloodshed to break their power, then shackle them tight. After that, either free them as favour without any return or release them against ransom - until the war lays down its arms - 47:4)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه says: Divine admonition came upon releasing prisoners against ransom in the battle of Badr. This was the first Jihād of Islām. That was a time when the might and power of disbelievers was yet to break apart. It was by chance that they had run into trouble. Finally, when Islām and Muslims went on to achieve total ascendency, Allah Ta'ālā abrogated the earlier injunction and revealed the verse of the Sūrah Muḥammad quoted above in which the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم and Muslims have been given four options about prisoners. These are:

ان شاء وا قتلوهم وان شاءوا استعبدوهم وان شاء وا افادوهم وان شاء وا اعتقوهم .

> If they wish, they can kill them all; or if they wish, they can put them in bondage; or if they wish, they can release them against ransom; or if they wish, they can (just) free them (without taking any ransom). (Maẓharī)

There is a consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah on the first two of the four options mentioned above that the Amir of Muslims has the dual right of killing the prisoners and holding them in bondage, but there is a difference of opinion among Muslim jurists about setting them free without compensation or releasing them against it.

The position taken by Imām Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Thawrī, Isḥāq, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭā' from among the Tābi'īn, is

that both these forms are permissible for the Amir of Muslims - that he may release the prisoners against compensation, or set them free without compensation, or exchange them for Muslim prisoners.

But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad, Awzā'ī, and Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk, Suddiyy and Ibn Jurayj say that setting them free is just not permissible without compenstion. Even releasing them against ransom is not permissible in the well-known creed of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. However, it appears in a report of al-Siyar al-Kabir that, should Muslims be in need of financial support, they can release prisoners against ransom. However, releasing them in exchange for Muslim prisoners is permissible with Imām Abū Hanifah and the two Jurists, Imāms Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad. (As evident from the two reports from them - Maẓharī).

Those who have permitted release against ransom or without ransom, they - as said by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās - regard the verse of Sūrah Muḥammad to be the abrogator (*nāsikh*) of the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and take the later as abrogated (*mansūkh*). According to Ḥanafī jurists, what stands abrogated (*mansūkh*) is the verse of Sūrah Muḥammad, while the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl: فَشَرِّدْبِهِمْ مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ (make them an example for those behind them -57) and Sūrah Al-Taubah: اقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوهُمْ (kill the Mushriks wherever you find them -9:5) are its abrogator (*nāsikh*). Therefore, according to them, it is not permissible to release the prisoners, whether against ransom or without it. (Maẓharī)

But, a careful deliberation into the respective words of the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and Sūrah Muḥammad leaves us with the impression that none of these two can be called the abrogator or the abrogated. In fact, they are two injunctions for two different situations.

It can be seen that the pivotal injunction of breaking the power of disbelievers (اثخان فی الارض) has been taken up in the verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, then, the option of releasing prisoners without compensation or against it (in the form of: من وفداء) has been given in Sūrah Muḥammad too, but the main objective has already been stated in the former - that of *'ithkhān fi 'l-arḍ'*. Thus, it means that once the power facade of the disbelievers has been broken through a thorough blood-shed, Muslims have the option of releasing prisoners against ransom, or setting them free without any ransom.

The report of al-Siyar al-Kabīr from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah could also be intended to establish that both kinds of injunctions can be given keeping in view the conditions and needs Muslims are faced with. وَاللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهٗ وَ تَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ.[1]

Verses 70 - 71

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّمَنْ فِيْٓ اَيْدِيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَسْرٰٓى ۙ اِنْ يَّعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ
فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُّؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّآ اُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۭ
وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللّٰهَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

O Prophet, say to the prisoners in your hands, "If Allah knows of any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and will forgive you. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [70]

And if they intend to commit treachery against you, then, they have already committed treachery against Allah, so Allah has given (you) power over them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [71]

Commentary

The prisoners taken in the battle of Badr were released against ransom. These were sworn enemies of Islām and Muslims who had left nothing undone when it came to harassing, torturing, beating and killing them, anytime, anywhere. The slightest opportunity on hand would make them inflict their savagery on them. Now that they were prisoners in the hands of Muslims, granting them a lease of life was no mean feat. In fact, it was much more than adequate for them, virtually touching the outside limits of kindness under given circumstances. Then, the amount of ransom taken from them was far too ordinary.

Certainly great is the kindness of Allah Ta'ālā. Imagine the consideration shown for the discomfort caused to them in paying that paltry sum for freedom and see how it is removed. It has been said in verse 70: If Allah shall find any good in your hearts, then, He shall give you

1. Some more detail about the war-prisoners will appear in the commentary of Sūrah Muḥammad *insha-allah.* (Editor)

what is better than what has been taken from you - and in addition to that, He shall forgive your past sins. The word: خير (*khayr*: good) used here means *'Imān* (faith) and *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity). The sense of the statement is that prisoners who, once they are free, were to take to *'Imān* and Islām with sincerity, then, they shall be receiving more and better than what they have given in ransom. Thus, made free and independent, the prisoners have been invited to consider their profit and loss as free individuals. In consequence, events prove that those from among them who embraced Islām were so heavily rewarded by Allah Ta'ālā right here in this mortal world with wealth and property which was way higher than what they had paid as ransom - not to mention the forgiveness they were blessed with and the high ranks of Paradise they received in the Hereafter.

Most commentators have said that this verse was revealed about Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی الله عنه, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم because he too was one of the prisoners of Badr and ransom was taken from him too. His case was special in that he had left Makkah to participate in the battle of Badr with almost seven hundred guineas of gold on his person which was meant to be spent on the army of the disbelievers. However, before this could be spent, he was taken a prisoner with the gold.

When came the time to pay ransom, he said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the gold he had with him should be applied to cover the amount of his ransom. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The wealth you brought to support disbelief became war spoils for Muslims. Ransom has to be in addition to that. Alongwith it, he also said: You should also pay the ransom for your two nephews, 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib and Nawfil ibn Ḥārith. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Abbās said: If so much financial burden was placed on me, I shall have to beg before the Quraysh like a pauper. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Why? What about the wealth you had entrusted with your wife, Umm al-Faḍl while leaving Makkah? Sayyidnā 'Abbās asked: How did you know this when I had entrusted it with my wife in the darkness of night, personally and in private. There is no third person who knows about it. He said: My Rabb has told me everything about it. When Sayyidnā 'Abbās heard these words, his heart became certain that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a true messenger of Allah. In fact,

Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه had held the Holy Prophet in esteem even before this happened, but there were some doubts as well - which Allah Ta'ālā removed at this moment. So, in reality, he had become a Muslim right then. But, he had a lot of money he had loaned out to the Quraysh of Makkah. If he were to declare his conversion to Islām immediately at that time, all that money would have gone waste. Therefore, he did not make a public announcement of it and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too said nothing about it to anyone. Before the Conquest of Makkah, he requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for his permission to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم advised him not to do that yet.

Following this conversation with Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also told him about the promise appearing in the present verse which says that should he embrace Islām and become a Muslim with unalloyed sincerity of heart, then, the money he has spent in ransom shall be returned to him by Allah Ta'ālā making it much more and much better for him. Hence, it was after his adherence to Islām had become public knowledge, he used to say: As for me, I am seeing the manifestation of this promise with my own eyes - because the amount of gold taken from me in ransom at that time was seven hundred guineas (20 *Uqiyah*). Now, at present, twenty of my slaves are running businesses at several places and no business venture being run by them is worth any less than twenty thousand dirhams each. And on top of all this, I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve Ḥujjāj, the visiting pilgrims, by providing to them drinking water from the sacred well of Zamzam - a service I consider to be so valuable as would pale out the possession of the entire wealth of the people of Makkah.

About some prisoners of the battle of Badr who had become Muslims, there remained a doubt that they, once back in Makkah, may turn away from Islām and start hurting them thereafter. In the next verse (71), Allah Ta'ālā has removed this apprehension by saying: اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And if they intend to commit treachery against you, then, they have already committed treachery against Allah, so Allah has given [you] power over them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise). It means that should these people decide to commit a breach of trust with you, it will not bring any hurt or loss to you.

They were the same people who had already committed a breach of trust with Allah. They had admitted of Allah being the Lord of all the worlds at the time of the original Covenant, then they became hostile to it. But, this breach of trust turned out to be fatal for none but them when, finally, they were disgraced and detained. As for Allah Ta'ālā, He is the knower of secrets hidden in hearts, and He is the possessor of great wisdom. If these people start opposing you even now, there is nowhere they can go, certainly not anywhere outside the range of the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. Inevitably, He shall seize them as before. To sum up, it can be said that, in verse 70, the *da'wah* of Islām was given to the released prisoners in the mode of persuasion - while in verse 71, it was in the mode of warning that they were told that success in their worldly life and in their life to come depends on Islām and 'Īmān.

Upto this point, the text was dealing with injunctions relating to fighting and killing disbelievers, taking them prisoners, setting them free and carrying on peace negotiations with them. In verses which follow right upto the end of the Sūrah itself, a particular related chapter has been taken up alongwith some details of its injunctions. They are the injunctions of Hijrah (Emigration) - because, situations can arise during a confrontation with disbelievers wherein neither the Muslims have the power to launch an attack against them and kill them off, nor are they willing to go for peace. In such a state of weakness, the only course through which Islām and Muslims can be salvaged is Hijrah (Emigration) which means that Muslims should leave that city or country and go to stay in some other land where acting freely in accordance with Islāmic injunctions is possible.

Verses 72 - 75

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوا وَّنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ
بَعْضٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم مِّن وَلَايَتِهِم مِّن
شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنِ اسْتَنصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ
النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ط اِلَّا تَفْعَلُوْهُ
تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰوَوْا وَّنَصَرُوْٓا اُولٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا ط لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّ رِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا مَعَكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ط
وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

Surely those who believed and emigrated and carried out Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives, and those who give refuge and help --- those are friends to each other. And those who believed and did not emigrate, with them you have no friendship at all unless they emigrate. And if they seek your help in the matter of faith, then, you are bound to help except against a people who have a treaty between you and them. And Allah is watchful over what you do. [72]

And those who disbelieve are friends to each other. If you do not do so, there shall be disorder on the earth, and a great corruption. [73]

And those who have believed and emigrated and carried out Jihād in the way of Allah, and those who gave refuge and help --- those are the believers in truth. For them there is forgiveness and a respectful provision. [74]

And those who believed later on and emigrated and participated with you in Jihād, then, they are one of you. As for the womb-relatives, some of them are closer to some as in the Book of Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of every thing. [75]

Commentary

These are the last four verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. The real objective therein is to describe the injunctions of Hijrah (Emigration) which relate to the inheritance of Muhājir (Emigrant) Muslims. In contrast, also mentioned there is the inheritance of non-Muhājir Muslims and non-Muslims.

The gist of these injunctions is that people who fall under Islamic legal authority are, in the first instance, of two kinds: (1) Muslim (2) Kāfir (disbeliever). Then, in terms of that period of time, Muslims were of two kinds: (1) Muhājir, those who after *hijrah* becoming obligatory, had left Makkah and had settled in Madīnah. (2) Non-Muhājir, those who had, for a valid reason or for some other reason, stayed behind in Makkah itself.

Mutual relationship was a common factor among individuals from all these kinds because, during the early period of Islām, it was quite common that a son would be Muslim while the father would be a Kāfir, or a father would be Muslim while his son would be a Kāfir. The same was true about other relationships, such as, brothers, nephews, maternal grandfathers and maternal uncles etc. And that there were mutual relationships among Muhājir and non-Muhājir Muslims is fairly obvious.

Allah Ta'ālā has, in His perfect mercy and profound wisdom, declared that the wealth and property left by the deceased person belongs to his or her own relatives as its deserving recepients. Although, the initial reality was that whoever received anything during this mortal life was entirely owned and possessed by Allah Ta'ālā in the real sense. It was a simple arrangement from Him that everyone was made, on His behalf, a temporary owner of what was given to man to use for a life-time and drive benefit from it. Therefore, by all cannons of logic, reason and justice the inheritance of every deceased person should have ricocheted back into His ownership - the practical implementation of which was to have it placed in the Public Treasury of the Islāmic State which serves the great masses of people created by Allah by fulfilling their multi-faceted developmental needs. But, in doing so, first of all everyone would have been naturally hurt to find out that, after death, one's wealth and property will not reach one's own children, nor to parents, nor to wife or husband. Then, its logical consequence was also somewhat equally natural - that no one would have cared to work for more and take steps to keep it preserved. In other words, no one would have been burning his feet to work for more than what was needed to collect just about enough to take care of the basic needs of his or her life. And it is obvious that this attitude to life would have meant disaster for all human beings and their cities.

Therefore, Allah *Jalla thana'uh*, made inheritance the right of relatives among human beings, specially relatives for whose benefit one has been working hard and putting financial assets together during the course of one's life.

Alongwith it, while instituting the distribution of inheritance, Islām has also kept in sight the important objective for which human beings were created, that is, the obedience to and worship of Allah Ta'ālā - and it was in terms of this objective that the entire human species was declared to be two separate peoples or nations: Believers and Disbelievers. The verse of the Qur'ān: خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (It is He who created you, then, among you there is a disbeliever and among you there is a believer - Al-Taghābun, 64:2) means exactly this.

This two-nation theory severed relationships based on lineage and kinship as far as it concerned inheritance stipulating that neither shall a Muslim receive a share from the inheritance of a related disbeliever, nor shall a Kāfir have any right in the inheritance of a Muslim relative. This is the subject stated in the first two verses (72, 73) and the injunction given therein is for ever, was never abrogated and has continued to be Islām's basic principle of inheritance since its very beginning and shall remain operative right through the day of Qiyāmah.

Allied with it, there is another injunction which concerns mutual inheritance between Muhājir and non-Muhājir Muslims about which it has been stated in the first verse that the relationship of a Muslim - until he emigrates from Makkah - shall also remain severed with Muslims who have emigrated, as far as inheritance is concerned. In this case, no Muhājir Muslim shall inherit his or her non-Muhājir relative, nor shall a non-Muhājir receive any share from the inheritance of a Muhājir Muslim. As obvious, this injunction was valid upto the time Makkah al-Mukarramah was still unconquered. After the Conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had himself declared: لاهجرة بعد الفتح (*lā hijrata ba'd al-fath* : There is no *hijrah* after the Conquest). It means that after the Conquest of Makkah the obligation of Hijrah does not remain operative any more, and when the obligation of Hijrah itself ceases to be operative any more, the question of severence of relationships with those who did not migrate stands automatically terminated.

Therefore, most commentators have said that this injunction

stands abrogated by virtue of the Conquest of Makkah while, according to investigative scholars of the field, this injunction too is everlasting and unabrogated - but that it has changed under specific conditions. If conditions in which this injunction was sent at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an were to reappear at some period of time or in some country, then, the same injunction will come into force once again.

To explain it further, it can be said that, before the Conquest of Makkah, every Muslim man and woman was obligated to migrate from Makkah as an absolute duty. In obedience to this injunction, most Muslims - with the exception of only a few - had migrated from Makkah to Madinah. At that time, not migrating from Makkah had become a sign of not being a Muslim. Therefore, at that time, Islam as professed by a non-Muhajir was also taken to be doubtful and it was for this reason that mutual inheritance between Muhajir and non-Muhajir was severed.

Now, if the same conditions were to re-emerge in some country once again - that it becomes totally impossible to fulfill Islamic obligations while living there - then, emigrating from that country will become obligatory once again, so much so that not emigrating under such conditions without a strong excuse, becomes a doubtless sign of disbelief, then, the same injunction shall still apply, that is, mutual inheritance between Muhajir and non-Muhajir shall not remain operative any more. This presentation, it is hoped, makes it clear that the injunction relating to the severence of mutual inheritance between Muhajir and non-Muhajir is really no separate injunction. In fact, it is the very same first injunction which describes the severence of inheritance between Muslim and non-Muslim. The only difference is that a non-muhajir in such a case was though deprived from the inheritance because of this sign of disbelief, yet he was not classed as a disbeliever just on the basis of this much sign of disbelief - unless, of course, one was to betray open, clear and decisive proof of one's Kufr or disbelief.

And perhaps, it is in view of this expedient consideration that yet another injunction relating to non-Muhajir Muslims has been mentioned at this place. This injunction specifies that, should they ask for help from Muhajir Muslims, then, it is necessary for Muhajir Muslims to help them - so that it becomes clear that they have not placed non-

Muhājir Muslims in the category of outright disbelievers, in fact, retained was their Islāmic right that they be helped when in need.

And since the background of the revelation of this verse is a particular Hijrah - that from Makkah to Madinah - while non-Muhājir Muslims were only those who had stayed back in Makkah threateningly surrounded by the disbelievers of Makkah, it is obvious that the help they sought could only be against the same disbelievers of Makkah. However, when the Holy Qur'ān ordered Muhājir Muslims to help them out, then, given a surface view of things, it could be deduced from here that helping them has been made necessary for Muslims against all peoples and under all conditions - even if, the people against whom help is sought already have a no-war pact with Muslims - although, doing justice and upholding pledges is a serious duty in Islām. Therefore, in this verse, an exempting rule was mentioned according to which, should non-Muhājir Muslims seek help from Muhājir Muslims against a people with whom Muslims already have a no-war pact, then, helping even brother Muslims against treaty-covered disbelievers is not permissible.

This was the essential meaning of the first two sentences. Now let us look at it in synchronization with the words. It is being said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ
آوَوا وَّنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ، وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم
مِّن وَلَايَتِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ،

that is: "Those who believed and those who emigrated (for the sake of Allah, leaving their homeland and relatives behind) and carried out Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives (by buying weapons and other war materials with their wealth and by staking their lives in the line of duty on the battlefield - which refers to the original Emigrants, the first among Muhājirs) and those who gave refuge and help (which refers to the Anṣār of Madīnah, the supporting residents of Madīnah, whereafter it was said about the two parties) --- those are friends to each other. (Then, it was said:) And those who did believe but did not emigrate, with them you have no friendship at all unless they emigrate.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has used the words: *Waliyy* and *Wilāyah* which mean friendship and close relations in the real sense. Ear-

ly Tafsīr authorities, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan, Qatadah, Mujāhid and others have said that *Wilāyah* at this place means *Wirathah* or inheritance while *Waliyy* means *Wārith* or inheritor. Nevertheless, some others have taken *Wilāyah* in the usual lexical sense, that is, friendship, help and support.

According to the first Tafsīr, the verse would mean that Muslim Muhājir and Anṣār shall be inheritors to each other. Their bond of inheritance shall not remain operative either with non-Muslims or with particular Muslims who did not emigrate. The first injunction, that is, severence of inheritance on the basis of difference in religion, was for ever and remained as such. But, as for the second injunction, the position was that after the Conquest of Makkah, when Hijrah was no more needed, the injunction of severence of inheritance between the categories of Muhājir and non-Muhājir also did not remain operative any more. From here, some Muslim jurists have deduced that the way difference in religion is a cause of severence of inheritance, similarly, the difference in homelands is also the cause of severence of inheritance. A detailed discussion on this subject appears in books of Islāmic Fiqh.

After that, it was said: وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (And if they seek your help in the matter of faith, then, you are bound to help except against a people who have a treaty between you and them. And Allah is watchful over what you do - 72). The sense of the statement is that people who have not migrated, relationship with them has though been terminated as far as inheritance is concerned, yet they are Muslims after all. If they seek help from Muhājir Muslims to safeguard their faith, then, to help them is obligatory on them. But, when doing so, Muhājir Muslims should not surrender rules of justice and their own fidelity to an existing treaty when a situation comes in which non-emigrating Muslims were to seek the help of Muhājir Muslims against a people with whom they already have a no-war pact. If so, even helping these Muslims against the peace pact party is not permissible.

A similar incident came to pass at the time of the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم arrived at a peace arrangement with the disbelievers of Makkah and included in the terms of peace was the condition that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would repatriate anyone who went to Madīnah thereafter. Just at the

time the peace treaty was being concluded, somehow there appeared Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضی اللہ عنہ whom the disbelievers of Makkah had put in detention where he was being tortured in all sorts of ways. He presented himself in person before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, told him how oppressed he had been and sought his help. Imagine this plaint was being made before none but him who had come to this world as the universal mercy. What this plaint from an oppressed Muslim would have done to his blessed heart is something everyone cannot realize easily. But, despite this empathy, he excused himself from helping him as bound by the injunction in the said verse, and let him go back.

His return in this manner was heart-rending for all Muslims present on the occasion. But, the blessed Prophet of Islām, guided by Divine words, was as if witnessing the welcome spectacle that the years of oppression were not going to last any longer and the reward of a few more days of patience was to be added to the destiny of Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضی اللہ عنہ. Then Makkah will soon be conquered. Then all these problems were going to be all over. Still, at that time, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم acted in accordance with the command of the Qur'ān and preferred treaty obligations over the personal misfortune of Sayyidnā Abū Jandal رضی اللہ عنہ. This is the distinctive feature of the Sharī'ah of Islām which has made its adherents deserving recepients of victory, honour, and success which awaits them in the Hereafter. Otherwise, as observed commonly, world powers play games with treaties and pacts. They use them as weights and levers to make the weak cringe and the strong walk in trap. The game plan always stays in their hands. With the slightest expediency in sight, they would unleash a hundred interpretations and kill the treaty and begin looking for scapegoats to put the blame on.

Said in the second verse (73) was: وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ (And those who disbelieve are friends to each other). The word: ولی (*waliyy*) used here, as stated earlier, carries a general sense included wherein is inheritance as well as the guardianship and patronage of affairs. Therefore, from this verse, we learn that disbelievers shall be considered inheritors to each other and the very law of the distribution of inheritance which is in force in their own religion shall be implemented as far as matters of their inheritance are concerned. In addition to

that, the guardian (*waliyy*) responsible for the upbringing of their orphaned children and for the marriage of their girls shall be from among them. In a nutshell, it means that, in family matters, the religious law of non-Muslims themselves shall stand duly protected in an Islāmic state.

At the end of the verse, it was said: اِلَّا تَفْعَلُوْهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيْرٌ (And if you will not do so, there shall be disorder on the earth, and a great corruption - 73).

This sentence is connected with all those injunctions mentioned a little earlier, for instance, (1) the Muhājir and the Anṣār should be friends to each other, which includes mutual help and support, as well as inheritance; (2) the Muhājir and non-Muhājir Muslims of that period of time should not consider themselves related to each other in terms of inheritance, but the doors of help and support should remain open subject to relevant conditions; (3) the disbelievers were caretakers (*waliyy*) of each other, therefore, Muslims should not interfere with their law of guardianship and inheritance in any way.

Thereafter the text says if things were not done according to these injunctions, there shall be disorder and corruption on the earth. Perhaps, this warning has been given in view of the importance of the injunctions described here for they were based on major principles of equity, justice and public peace. The related verses make it amply clear that the way mutual help, support and inheritance depend on lineal bond - in the same manner, religious bond has its own importance in this matter. In fact, religious bond has precedence over lineal bond. This is the reason why a Kāfir (disbeliever) cannot inherit from a Muslim and a Muslim cannot inherit from a Kāfir - even though, they be fathers or sons or brothers by lineage. Along with it, in order to block religious prejudice and pagan partisanship, instructions were given that, no doubt, the religious bond is so formidable, yet standing by the terms of a treaty comes first and is more preferable. Contravention of the terms of a treaty is not permissible under the heat of religious partisanship. Similarly, also given was the instruction that the disbelievers are responsible for each other as guardians and inheritors, therefore, no interference should be made in their personal law of guardianship and inheritance. On the surface, these look like a few subsidiary injunctions, but they are, in reality, comprehensive basic

principles of equity and justice for all which guarantee world peace. This is the reason why, at this place, following the description of these injunctions, warning has been given in words which have not been generally used in the case of other injunctions: 'If you will not do so, there shall be disorder and corruption on the earth.' Also given within these words is a hint that these injunctions have an effectiveness of their own in checking disorder and corruption.

Mentioned in the third verse (74) are words of praise for the Ṣaḥābah who emigrated from Makkah and for the Anṣār of Madīnah who helped them, as well as the attestation to their being true Muslims and the promise of forgiveness and respectable provision made to them. When it was said: أُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا (those are the believers in truth), the hint given was in the direction that those who did not migrate were though Muslims, but their Islām was neither perfect, nor certain - because there existed the probability that they may really be hypocrites professing Islām only outwardly. After that, it was said: لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ (For them there is forgiveness) - as it has been explained in sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) Aḥādīth: . اَلْإِسْلَامُ يَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ (Islām demolishes what was before it) and: وَالْهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهَا (Hijrah razes what was before it). In short, this means that the act of becoming a Muslim goes on to demolish the entire edifice of past sins. Similarly, the making of Hijrah razes all past sins.

Described in the fourth verse (75) is the injunction concerning different categories of Muhājirin (Muhājirs, emigrants). It says: Though, some of them are the very first among Muhājirin - those who migrated earlier than the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. Then, there is a second category of Muhājirs - those who migrated after the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah and, because of this, there will be difference in the ranks they are to have in the Hereafter, but regarding injunctions of this mortal world, they too shall be covered by the injunction governing the first category of Muhājirīn in that they are inheritors to each other. Therefore, addressing the first among the Muhājirīn, it was said: فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ مِنكُمْ (then, they are one of you - 75). It means that these Muhājirin of the second category are also a part of your group. Hence, under injunctions governing inheritance, they are governed by rules which apply to Muhājirīn in general.

This is the very last verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. Given at the end of it

is a comprehensive regulation of the law of inheritance through which stood abrogated what was an interim injunction promulgated during the early period of Hijrah mentioned in the preceding verses about having the Muhājirin and Anṣār become inheritors to each other through an arrangement of brotherhood between them. The words of the last verse which abrogated this temporary law of inheritance are: وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ (As for the womb-relatives, some of them are closer to some as in the Book of Allah -75). Let us study them in a greater detail

In Arabic, the word: اولو (*ulu*) is used to carry the sense of being the possessor, owner, person or people of certain entitlement. In absence of an exact counterpart in English, it is usually translated as 'men of' or 'people of ', as in: 'people of wisdom' for: اولو العقل (*ulu 'l-'aql*) and 'people of authority' for: اولو الامر *(ulu 'l-amr)*. Therefore, the word: اولو الارحام (*ulu 'l--arḥām*) means the people of *arḥām* or wombs. *Arḥām* is the plural of *raḥim* which is basically the name of the part of the body where the creative process of the human child takes place and since the bond of relationship is established via the association of *raḥim* (رحم), therefore, اولوالارحام (*ulu 'l-arḥām* : translated literally as womb-relatives) is used in the sense of relatives.

The meaning of the verse is that, though a universal bond of brotherhood binds all Muslims to each other, because of which, if needed, helping and supporting each other becomes obligatory, and that they also inherit from each other. But, Muslims who are bound by mutual relationship have precedence over other Muslims. The phrase: فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ (*fī Kitābillah*: translated literally 'as in the Book of Allah - 75') at this place has been used in the sense of: فِي حُكْمِ اللَّهِ (*fī ḥukmi 'l-lāh*) which means that Allah Ta'ālā has made this law through His special command.

The rule of procedure given by this verse is that the distribution of inheritance should be on the criterion of relationship and the word: اولوالارحام (*ulu 'l-arḥām*) is applied to relatives in an absolute sense. Out of these, the shares of particular relatives have already been determined by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Nisā'. These are called *Aṣḥāb al-Furūḍ* or *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* in the terminology of the Law of Inheritance. Popularly referred to as "Qur'ānic heirs," they mean those who are entitled to a statutory share in the inheritance of a deceased person. Any prop-

erty which remains, after the determined shares have been given, should be distributed over other relatives as provided in this verse. Then, it is also evident that it is not possible for anyone to distribute any property over all relatives because some kind of a distant relationship definitely exists among human beings of the whole world - for all of them owe their fact of birth to but one father and mother, Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā عليهم السلام (Ādam and Eve). Therefore, the only practical way of distributing inheritance over relatives can be that, by giving close relatives precedence over those distant, the benchmark of the near should be used to exclude the distant. A detailed description of this is present in the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which stipulate that, after having given the shares of *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* (Qur'ānic heirs), whatever remains should be given to the *'Aṣbāt* (agnates or paternal relatives) of the deceased person, degree-wise, that is, by giving precedence to the near agnate (*'aṣbah*) over the distant one, the benchmark of the near should be used to exclude the distant.

And in case, there is no one alive from among the agnates (*'aṣbāt*), then, distribution has to be made over rest of the relatives.

In addition to *'aṣbāt* or agnates, there are a host of other relatives. It is for them that the word: *Dhawi al-Arḥām* has been particularized in the technical terminology of the science of inheritance and distribution. But, this terminology has found currency in a later period. In the Holy Qur'ān, the word: أُولُو الأَرْحَام (*ulu 'l-arḥām* : womb-relatives), according to its lexical connotation, covers all relatives included wherein are *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* (Qur'ānic heirs), *'Aṣbāt* (agnates) and *Dhawi al-Arḥām* (womb-relatives) in a general sense.

Then, some details about the subject have been covered in Sūrah al-Nisā' where Allah Ta'ālā has Himself determined the shares of particular relatives and which are known as *Dhawi al-Furūḍ* in the terminology of Inheritance. As for the rest, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

الحقوا الفرائض باهلها فما بقى فهو لاولى رجل ذكر . (البخارى)

It means: After giving shares to those identified in the Qur'ān, that which remains is to be given to males nearer to the deceased. (al-Bukhārī)

They are known as *'Aṣbāt* (agnates) in the terminology of inheritance. If there be no one from among the *'aṣbāt* (agnates) of the deceased person, then, according to the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, other relatives get it. These relatives are technically known as *Dhawi 'l-Arḥām* (womb-relatives) such as, maternal uncle or maternal aunt and others.

The last sentence of this last verse of Sūrah Al-Anfāl has abrogated the law of Islāmic inheritance mentioned in verses earlier to this. According to that law, mutual inheritance used to be in force among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, even though there be no lenial kinship between them. It was abrogated because it was an emergency-oriented injunction given during the initial period of Hijrah.

Sūrah Al-Anfāl ends here. May Allāh Ta'ālā give us all the *Taufīq* of understanding it and acting in accordance with it.

◇

Praised is Allah with whose help Sūrah al-'Anfāl comes to its conclusion the night of Thursday, 22nd of Jumada II, Hijrah Year 1381. I seek from Allah Ta'ālā His *Taufīq* and help in the *Tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Taubah and for Allah is all praise from its beginning to its end --- Muḥammad Shafī, may he be forgiven.

A review of it was completed on the day of Jumu'ah, 19th of Jumāda I, Hijrah Year 1390 and praised be Allah for that.

Sūrah Al-Taubah

(Repentance)

Sūrah al-Taubah is Madanī and it has one hundred and twenty nine verses and sixteen sections

Verses 1 – 5

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ عَاهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ
﴿١﴾ فَسِيْحُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ
مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْزِى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ وَاَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
وَرَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بَرِىْٓءٌ مِّنَ
الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۙ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ فَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ
فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِعَذَابٍ
اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عَاهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوْكُمْ
شَيْـًٔا وَّلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَحَدًا فَاَتِمُّوْۤا اِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ اِلٰى
مُدَّتِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَاِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْاَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ
فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ وَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوْهُمْ
وَاقْعُدُوْا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا
الزَّكٰوةَ فَخَلُّوْا سَبِيْلَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥﴾

Here is a withdrawal (proclaimed) by Allah and His Messenger against the Mushriks* with whom you have a treaty. [1]

So, move in the land freely for four months, and be sure

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* Mushriks, anglicized plural of *mushrik*, stands for *al-mushrikīn* – those who associate partners with Allah.

that you can never defeat Allah and that Allah is about to disgrace the disbelievers. [2]

And here is an announcement, from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Ḥajj, that Allah is free from (any commitment to) the Mushriks, and so is His Messenger. Now, if your repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be sure that you can never defeat Allah. And give those who disbelieve the 'good' news of a painful punishment. [3] **Except those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty, and they abated nothing of your rights and backed no one against you, so then, fulfill the treaty with them up to their term. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing.** [4]

So, when the sacred months expire, kill the Mushriks wherever you find them. And catch them and besiege them and sit in ambush for them everywhere. Then, if they repent and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh, leave their way. Surely, Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [5]

Commentary

Now begins Sūrah Al-Barā'ah which is also called Sūrah Al-Taubah (as written; also Sūrah At-Taubah as pronounced). It is called Barā'ah for the reason that it mentions *barā'ah* or disengagement with the consequences of what the *kuffār* (disbelievers) do. Then, it is also called Taubah because it announces that the repentance of Muslims has been accepted. (Maẓharī). It is a feature of this Sūrah that '*bismillāh*' (بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ: *Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the [All-] Merciful, the Very Merciful) is not written in the copies of the Qur'ān when the Sūrah begins. However, Bismillāh is written at the head of all Sūrahs of the Qur'ān – the sole exception being that of Sūrah Al-Taubah. Before we find out the relevant reason, let us bear in mind that the Holy Qur'ān was revealed bit by bit during the period of twenty three years. The verses of a Sūrah were revealed at different times. When Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl would come with a revelation, he would also point out to the Divinely intended arrangement of each revealed verse, explaining that it should be placed in such and such Sūrah after such and such 'Āyah (verse). It was in accordance with this Divinely intended arrangement that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have scribes of the revelation write them up.

And when, at the end of a Sūrah, the next was to begin, '*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*' would be revealed before the next actually did – which made it easy to understand that the previous Sūrah had concluded and another Sūrah was beginning. All Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān were revealed in that manner. Sūrah Al-Taubah is, in terms of the order of revelation, among one of the very last Sūrahs. When it began, neither was Bismillāh revealed as customary, nor did the Holy Prophet ﷺ instruct the scribe of the revelation to do that. So, this was how things stood when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم passed away.

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه arranged the Holy Qur'ān in the form of a book during the period of his Caliphate, Bismillāh was not there at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah, an arrangement contrary to that of the rest of Sūrahs. Therefore, a doubt rose – perhaps, this is not an independent Sūrah, or may as well be a part of some other Sūrah. Now, they thought, if this happens to be a part of some other Sūrah, which Sūrah is that? In terms of its subjects, Sūrah Al-Anfāl seemed to fit the slot.

Also, as narrated by Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضى الله عنه elsewhere, 'during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, both these Sūrahs were called: قرينتين (*qarīnatayn*: the two connected ones)'. (Maẓharī). Therefore, it was placed after Sūrah Al-Anfāl. This precaution was taken for the reason that, should it be a part of another Sūrah, it must stay with it. But, it was also probable that it may be a separate and independent Sūrah. Therefore, when writing, a particular format was adopted whereby some space was left open at the end of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and before the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah – similar to the spot meant for writing Bismillāh at the head of other Sūrahs.

The precise reason why Bismillāh was not written at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah or Al-Taubah has been reported from the great compiler of the revealed text of the Qur'ān, Saiyyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه himself. At that time, he was answering a question posed by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the Saḥābī and Mufassir (exegete) of the Qur'ān, which appears in Abū Dāwūd, An-Nasā'i, the Musnād of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī. In that question, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās had also asked Sayyidnā 'Uthmān about the order in which the Sūrahs of the Qur'ān have been arranged. Giving an example, he pointed out that placed

first were the larger Sūrahs that have more than hundred verses. Technically, they are called مئين (*mi'īn*: hundreds). After that, there are the large Sūrahs that have less than hundred verses. They are called مثانی (*mathānī*: the oft-repeated ones). Placed thereafter were smaller Sūrahs that are called مفصلات (*mufaṣṣalāt*: the Surahs starting from "Qāf" [50] to the end of the Qur'ān [114]). The order of this very arrangement necessitated that Sūrah Al-Taubah should be placed before Sūrah Al-Anfāl – because the verses carried by Sūrah Al-Taubah are more than one hundred while those of Sūrah Al-Anfāl are less than one hundred. The first seven long Sūrahs called سبع طوال (*sab' ṭiwal*: the seven long ones) also show that the placement of Sūrah Al-Taubah before Sūrah Al-Anfāl is naturally more appropriate there too. After having stated the existing position, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ asked about the consideration that had led to a contrary arrangement. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'Correct. But, the Qur'ān was serious matter. Precaution demanded that we do what we did – because, in case Sūrah Al-Taubah is not taken as an independent Sūrah, instead, is taken as a part of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, it will be obvious that the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl have been revealed earlier and those of Sūrah Al-Taubah after that. Given this situation, it is not permissible to give precedence to the verses of the latter over the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl without the sanction of *Waḥy* (revelation). And since we did not find any such instruction in the *Waḥy*, therefore, Sūrah Al-Anfāl was made to precede and Sūrah Al-Taubah, to succeed.'

From these precise details we learn that the reason for not writing Bismillāh at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah lies in the probability that Sūrah Al-Taubah may not be an independent Sūrah, instead, be a part of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. Given this probability, writing Bismillāh at this place shall be as incorrect as someone were to write Bismillāh in the middle of any Sūrah of the Qur'ān.

On this basis, Muslim jurists have said that a person who has already been reciting Sūrah Al-Anfāl from above and is going to begin Sūrah Al-Taubah, then, he or she should not recite *Bismillāh*. But, a person who is starting his or her *tilāwah* (recitation of the Qur'ān) from the beginning, or from somewhere in the middle, of this very Sūrah should say: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*) and then begin his or her recitation. Some people who do not know rules think

that the recitation of Bismillāh while reciting Sūrah Al-Taubah is not permissible under any condition. This is a mistaken notion. Then, they would make another mistake on top of that. Instead of reciting Bismillāh, they would recite: أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ النَّارِ (I seek the protection of Allah from the Fire) when initiating or beginning from it. For this, there is no proof from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions.

Then, there is the statement of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه reported in a narrative from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. It says, 'the reason for not writing Bismillāh at the beginning of Sūrah Barā'ah (Al-Taubah) is that بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*) is an assurance of protection, but in Sūrah Al-Barā'ah, this assurance of protection and the pledge of peace given to disbelievers has been terminated.' This statement should be taken as a refinement of approach that does not go against the real cause. And the real cause is nothing but that Bismillāh was not written on the basis of the probability that Sūrah Al-Anfāl and Sūrah Al-Taubah may be one. Then, there could be yet another subtle point about why it was not written. This Sūrah proclaims freedom from any responsibility for the disbelievers and announces the withdrawal of peace and protection from those people – which is not fit for Bismillāh. Therefore, in terms of the design of creation, particular causes were generated here so that Bismillāh was not to be written at this place.

To understand the present verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah fully, it is necessary to know some events that became the cause of the revelation of these verses. Therefore, given here first are consolidated details of the relevant events:

1. As a whole, Sūrah Al-Taubah carries the description of some battles, events related to them, and many injunctions and rulings emerging therefrom – for example, the termination of pacts with all tribes of Arabia, the Conquest of Makkah, the battles of Ḥunain and Tabūk. Out of these events, first came the Conquest of Makkah in Hijrah year 8, then came the battle of Ḥunain in the same year, then the battle of Tabūk in Rajab of Hijrah year 9. Finally came the announcement terminating pacts with all tribes of Arabia in the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Hijrah year 9.

2. A summary of subjects concerning the repudiation of treaties mentioned in these verses shows that it was in the Hijrah year 6 that

the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم started with the intention of 'Umrah but the Quraysh blocked their entry into Makkah. Then came the peace treaty between them at Ḥudaibiyah. The time frame of this treaty, as reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, was ten years. In Makkah, there were other tribes too, other than the Quraysh. An article was included in the peace treaty to cover them. It allowed a tribe, from out of the tribes other than the Quraysh, to become allies to the Quraysh and be with them, if they chose to do so; and whoever chose to become the ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and be with him was allowed to do that. So, the tribe of Khuzā'ah chose to become an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and went with him, while the tribe of Banū Bakr chose to go with the Quraysh. According to the treaty, it was necessary that within ten years there shall be no internecine war, nor shall any aggressor be helped from any side. And the tribe that was an ally of a party to the treaty shall be considered as governed by the same rule that governed the party. In other words, launching an attack on it or helping the aggressor was to be taken as a contravention of the treaty.

This treaty was signed in the Hijrah year 6. In Hijrah year 7, according to this treaty, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions left for Makkah to perform the 'Umrah they had missed earlier (*'Umrah al-qaḍā'*). After staying there for three days, he returned as stipulated in the treaty. Until then, no party had acted against the peace treaty in any way.

After that, it was within a period of five or six months when the tribe of Banū Bakr mounted a nightly ambush against the tribe of Banū Khuzā'ah. Thinking that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was far away and things were happening during the night which would make it difficult for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to find out details of what had actually happened, the Quraysh too came to the assistance of Banaū Bakr by providing weapons and men to them.

Events as they transpired and conditions as they prevailed made the Quraysh too accept that the treaty of peace entered into at Ḥudaibiyah – requiring a ten-year moratorium on internecine wars – was broken.

The tribe of Banū Khuzā'ah, being an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, informed him about this event. When he learnt about this breach of trust committed by the Quraysh, he started making secret

preparations for war against them.

During their encounters at Badr, 'Uhud and Ahzab, the Quraysh had realized that some unseen Divine power was at work in favor of Muslims. They were no more intoxicated with their muscle and might. Now that they had broken their solemn pledge, the danger of a war likely to be initiated by Muslims had become all too obvious to them. The likelihood became much stronger after the report of their breach of trust reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he chose to observe a total silence about the matter. Left with no choice, they asked Abu Sufyan to go to Madinah personally, assess the situation there and should he sense a war action being initiated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he should offer his apologies on what had happened in the past and have the treaty renewed for the future.

When Abu Sufyan reached Madinah, he did notice some indicators of war preparations being made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This increased his concerns. He went out to see prominent Sahabah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم one by one so that they would recommend his case and help him have the treaty renewed. But, all of them refused to do so in view of their unpleasant past and present dealings. Consequently, Abu Sufyan returned empty-handed. The Quraysh of Makkah were hit by panic.

At the other end, as reported in Bidayah and Ibn Kathir, it was on Ramadan 10, Hijrah year 8 when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم marched out from Madinah with a large force of his noble Companions in order to attack Makkah. Ultimately, Makkah was conquered.

Conquest of Makkah: Vanquished enemies were treated nobly

At the time of the Conquest, there were many Quraysh chiefs who believed in the veracity of Islam earlier too, but they could not express themselves freely due to peer pressure in the society. Now that they had their opportunity, they embraced Islam. As for those who chose to stick to their time-worn creed of disbelief even at that hour, they too – with the exception of some individuals – were granted amnesty by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was an unusual demonstration of morals, prophetic and miraculous, something others could not even dream of. He ignored all their hostilities and injustices in the past and simply said: 'Today, I say to you exactly what was said by Yusuf عليه السلام to his brothers at the time when they had reached him in Egypt with their

parents: لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (This day, there is no blame on you).' It means that, for him, taking a revenge for the past injustices inflicted by them or seeking to punish them in some way was unimaginable, in fact, he did not consider it appropriate even to blame them for anything that happened in the past.

Rules for four kinds of Mushriks at the time of the Conquest of Makkah

So then, Makkah came under the control of Muslims. Non-Muslims living in and around Makkah were given full protection of their lives and properties. But, that was a time when the existing status of these non-Muslims was different. One kind of people among them was of those who were a party to the peace treaty of Ḥudaibiyah which they themselves broke and which by itself became the cause of the Conquest of Makkah. Then, there was another set of people with whom a peace treaty was signed for a specified period of time and they continued abiding by this treaty, such as the two tribes of Banū Kinānah called Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj. The peace treaty with them was for a specified period of time and, at the time of the revelation of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah (Al-Taubah) as stated by Khāzin, they had another nine months left for their period of treaty to expire.

Thirdly, there were people with whom a peace treaty was concluded without any set time limit. Fourthly, there were those with whom no treaty existed.

The unsavory experience of all treaties entered into by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with disbelievers or the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) was that they flouted these openly and secretly always conspiring with enemies to hurt him and his Muslim adherents as much as they could. Therefore, led by his own long experience and Divinely inspired indicators, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had made up his mind not to enter into any peace treaty with any of these people and that the Arabian Peninsula was to be particularized with Muslims only as a bastion of Islām. This required a proclamation soon after the takeover of Makkah and the Arabian Peninsula ordering non-Muslims to leave and go somewhere else. But, in view of Islām's principle of justice, equity and humane dealing as well as under the universal mercy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, doing something like that without allowing a suitable time limit was not considered appropriate.

Therefore, at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah (Al-Taubah), separate injunctions were revealed that covered the four kinds of non-Muslim groups.

The first such group was that of the Quraysh of Makkah who had themselves broken the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. Now, they deserved no extra respite. But, since this was the period of 'sacred months' during which fighting and killing was forbidden by Allah, therefore, the injunction which covers them appears in the fifth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah, that is, فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ (So, when the sacred months expire, kill the Mushriks wherever you find them. And catch them and besiege them and sit in ambush for them everywhere. Then, if they repent and establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*, leave their way. Surely, Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful – 9:5). It means that they had, though, forfeited all their rights by breaking the treaty obligations, but observing the sanctity of the 'sacred months' was after all necessary, therefore, they should either leave the Arabian Peninsula soon after the 'sacred months' expire, or embrace Islām, or be prepared to face war.

Then, there was the second group with whom a peace treaty was made for a specified period of time and they had abided by it. The injunction about them was given in the fourth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah:

إِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عَاهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَّلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ
أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُّوْا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلٰى مُدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ

Except those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty, and they have abated nothing of your rights and backed no one against you, so then, fulfill the treaty with them up to their term. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing – (9:4).

This injunction pertained to Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj as a result of which they were allowed a respite of nine months.

As for the third and the fourth group, only one injunction was revealed to cover both. It has been mentioned in the first and the second verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah as follows:

بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖٓ إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ عَاهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۝ فَسِيْحُوْا فِى
الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَّاعْلَمُوْٓا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ وَأَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْزِى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ

Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah and His Messen-

> ger against those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty. So, move in the land freely for four months, and be sure that you can never defeat Allah and that Allah is about to disgrace the disbelievers – (9: 1,2).

Thus, according to the first two verses, all those who were covered by some treaty without a fixed time limit, or those with whom there was no treaty, were allowed a respite of four months.

And according to the fourth verse, those who had a treaty for a specified period of time received a respite until it expired and, according to the fifth verse, the Mushriks of Makkah got their respite until the 'sacred months' expired.

The generosity of giving respite to disbelievers even after treaties with them had expired

It was stipulated that these injunctions shall come into force and the period of respite shall start from the time the relevant information has been promulgated throughout the Arabian Peninsula. According to the arrangement made for this purpose, the public proclamation was to be made in the great gathering of the Ḥajj of the Hijrah year 9 at Minā and 'Arafāt. This finds mention in the third and fourth verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah as follows:

وَاَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖٓ اِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بَرِيْۗءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ فَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِى اللّٰهِ، وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ .

> And here is an announcement, from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Ḥajj, that Allah is free from [any commitment to] the Mushriks, and so is His Messenger. Now, if you repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be sure that you can never defeat Allah. And give those who disbelieve the 'good' news of a painful punishment – (9:3,4).

When abrogating a treaty with disbelievers, taking any action against them without prior public announcement is not correct

So, in order to implement this Divine injunction, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهما to the Hajj of the Hijrah year 9 at Makkah al-Mukarramah and had

them make this proclamation before a gathering of all tribes of Arabia on the plains of 'Arafāt and Minā. It was all too obvious that this injunction would become widely known through the medium of that great gathering all over Arabia. However, as a matter of added precaution, he had this proclamation particularly made in distant Yemen through Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه.

After this public proclamation, the situation was that the first group, that is, the disbelievers of Makkah had to leave the limits of the state by the end of the 'sacred months,' that is, the end of the month of Muḥarram of the Hijrah year 10. Similarly, the deadline for the second group was Ramaḍān of the Hijrah year 10; and that of the third and fourth groups was the tenth of Rabī' ath-Thānī of the Hijrah year 10. Any contravention of this executive order would have rendered the offender liable to face an armed confrontation. Under this arrangement, by the time of Ḥajj next year, no disbeliever was to remain within state limits. This will appear in verse 28 of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been said: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هٰذَا (so, let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs). And the saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Ḥadīth: لايحجن بعد العام مشرك (The disbelievers shall not perform Ḥajj after this year) means precisely this.

Up to this point, given here was an explanation of the first verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah in the light of corresponding events. Now, some relevant point that emerge from these verses are being discussed below.

What do these five verses teach?

1. First of all, soon after the Conquest of Makkah, the general amnesty granted by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to the Quraysh of Makkah, and to other enemy tribes, taught Muslims a practical lesson in high morals. The lesson was: if they overpower an enemy who stands helpless before them, they should not seek revenge from that enemy for his past hostilities. Rather than do something like that, they should actually demonstrate the best of Islāmic morals by being generous and forgiving to their enemies. Though, acting in this manner may require a certain trampling over their natural feelings, still such a conduct is full of great advantages.

(A) To begin with, it can be said that revenge does help one take out anger, at least temporarily – which may even give one a sense of

personal relief – yet, this sense of relief or comfort is transitory. Then, as compared with it, the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā and the high ranks of Paradise one is going to get are far more and are for ever in all respects. Consequently, reason demands that one should prefer what is everlasting to what is temporary.

(B) Then, there is this act of suppressing one's angry emotions after having overpowered the enemy. This clearly proves that the battle fought by these people had no selfish motive behind it. The only motive they had was fighting in the way of Allah – and this great objective is what draws the decisive line between the Jihād of Islām and the wars of common kings and rulers of the world, and what also lays bare the difference in Jihād and rotten aggression. Thus, the truth is that a war waged for Allah to implement His injunctions shall be what Jihād is, otherwise it shall remain a high-handed exercise in disorder.

(C) The third benefit yielded by this conduct comes naturally. When the overpowered enemy observes the high morals of the victors, he is likely to be drawn towards Islām and Muslims, something which is bound to lead him on to the path of his own success in life – and this is the real objective of Jihād.

Forgiving disbelievers never means lack of vigilance against any impending harm from them

2. The second ruling which has been deduced from these verses is that forgiveness and generosity do not mean that one should become negligent about self-protection against the evil designs of enemies by giving them free rein to go ahead and keep causing loss and injury to their forgivers. No doubt, forgiveness and generosity are in order, but along with these, commonsense demands that one should take lesson from past experience and restructure the pattern of life ahead by blocking all holes and crevices through which one could come within the range of enemy hostility. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: لايلدغ المرء من جحر واحد مرتين (One is not bitten twice from the same hole) meaning that a person does not put his hand twice in the same hole from which a poisonous reptile had bitten him.

The Qur'ānic proclamation of the withdrawal of Hijrah year 9 and the ensuing instructions given to the Mushriks that they should vacate the environs of the Sacred Mosque peacefully within the period of respite allowed are proofs of this wise strategy.

3. The initial verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah also tell us that forcing weak people to leave a place without reasonable notice of evacuation, or attacking them without warning is cowardly, and very ignoble indeed. Whenever such an action has to be taken, it is necessary to make a public announcement first so that the affected people, who do not accept the law of the land, may get the time to go wherever they wished, freely and conveniently. This becomes clear through the general proclamation of the Hijrah year 9 as mentioned in the cited verses and as demonstrated by the legal respite granted to all affected groups.

4. The fourth ruling emerging from the cited verses tells us that, in case there is the need to annul a treaty of peace already made – which is permitted subject to some conditions – it is far better to allow the treaty to remain valid until it expires automatically. This has been commanded in the fourth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah where Muslims were required to fulfill their treaty obligations to the tribes of Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj for the remaining nine months.

5. The fifth ruling from the cited verses tells us about the standard Muslim attitude towards the enemies of Islām. When confronted with enemies, Muslims should always keep in mind that they are no enemy to them personally. The truth of the matter is that they are opposed to their disbelief, which is actually the cause of their own loss in the present world as well as in the Hereafter. As for the opposition of Muslims to them, that too is really based on good wishes for them. Therefore, Muslims should never abandon the opportunity to give good counsel to them, whether in war or peace. This theme appears in these verses repeatedly. It promises real prosperity for them in this world and in the world to come, only if they were to rescind their thinking. The text does not leave it at that. It also warns them of the consequences: if they refused to repent and correct, they would not only be destroyed and killed in the present world but, they would also not escape their punishment even after death. It is interesting that, along with the proclamation of withdrawal in these verses, the strain of sympathetic insistence also continues.

6. The sixth ruling comes out from the fourth verse where Muslims have been prompted to fulfill their pledge right through the end until the term of the peace treaty expired. Immediately thereafter, the verse has been concluded with the sentence: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Surely, Allah loves

the God-fearing). This gives a clear hint to the advice that Muslims should observe utmost precaution in fulfilling the pledge they have given. They should never look for lame excuses and far-fetched interpretations only to find a way to contravene treaty obligations, as done by nations at large.

7. Details as they appear in the fifth verse carry the seventh ruling. When war in defense of a correct objective breaks out against any power, all available combat resources should be used fully and conclusively. That is a time when showing mercy and appeasement would be showing cowardice.

From the same fifth verse comes the eighth ruling, that is, trust in a non-Muslim who has become a Muslim depends on three things. (A) Taubah (repentance) over disbelief in the past, (B) the establishing of Ṣalāh and (C) the paying of Zakāh as due. Until these three conditions have been implemented practically, the option of war will not be withdrawn simply on the basis that someone has recited the Kalimah of Islām. When after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, some people refused to pay Zakāh, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had declared a Jihād against them. On that occasion, by referring to this very verse in support of his action, he was able to convince and satisfy all Companions.

8. The ninth question in these verses concerns the meaning of the expression: يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ (*yaumu 'l-ḥajju 'l-akbar*: The day of the great *ḥajj*). The sayings of early commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā 'Umar, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنهم اجمعين say that 'the day of the greater *ḥajj*' means 'the day of 'Arafah' because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: الحج عرفة ('Arafah is the Ḥajj). (Abu Dāwūd, Tirmidhī)

9. Some others have said that it signifies: يوم النحر (*yaumu 'n-naḥr*: the day of sacrifice), that is, the tenth of Dhu al-ḥijjah. In order to accommodate all these sayings, Sufyān ath-Thawrī and other authorities have said that all five days of the Ḥajj are the substantiation of: يوم الحج الاكبر (*yaumu -'l-ḥajju 'l-akbar*: the day of the greater *ḥajj*) which includes 'Arafah and *Yaumu 'n-naḥr* both. As for the use of the word *yaum* or day in the singular, it is in accordance with the usage elsewhere – as the Holy Qur'ān calls a few days of the battle of Badr by

the name of يوم الفرقان :*yaumu 'l-Furqān* in the singular form. Then, there are the common wars of Arabia. They too are identified by the word *yaum* or day – even though, they may have been spread over many more days – such as, يوم البعاث :*yaumu 'l-bu'āth,* يوم الاحد :*yaumu l'Uḥūd* etc. And since 'Umrah is called 'the smaller *ḥajj,* (حج اصغر), therefore, it was to make it distinct that Ḥajj was called 'the greater *ḥajj*' (*al-ḥajju 'l-akbar*). This tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, Hajj as it takes place every year is nothing but 'the greater *ḥajj*' (*al-ḥajju 'l-akbar*). As for the popular assumption that the year in which 'Arafah falls on a Friday is specially 'the greater *ḥajj,*' it has no real basis except that the year in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed his last Ḥajj (حجة الوداع : *ḥajjatu 'l-wadā'*) just happened to be the year in which 'Arafah fell on the day of Jumu'ah. No doubt, this is a matter of distinction in its own place, but it has nothing to do with the sense of this verse.

In his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: By calling the days of Ḥajj as 'the greater *ḥajj,*' the problem that 'Umrah cannot be performed during the days of Ḥajj has also been resolved here – because, the Holy Qur'ān has specified these days for 'the greater *ḥajj.*'

Verses 6 – 11

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ
اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾ كَيْفَ
يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَعِندَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
عَاهَدتُّمْ عِندَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا
لَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧﴾ كَيْفَ وَإِن يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا
يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلًّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ يُرْضُونَكُم بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَىٰ
قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾ اشْتَرَوْا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا
فَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩﴾ لَا
يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلًّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

فَإِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِى
الدِّيْنِ ؕ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

And if any one of the Mushriks seeks your protection, give him protection until he listens to the Word of Allah, then let him reach his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know. [6]

How can the Mushriks have a treaty with Allah and His Messenger? Except those with whom you made a treaty near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*. Then, as long as they remain straight with you, remain straight with them. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing. [7]

How (can they have a treaty) while if they overcome you, they shall not observe any bond or treaty in your case. They want to please you with (words from) their mouths, but their hearts refuse. Most of them are sinners. [8]

They have taken a paltry price for the verses of Allah, so they have prevented (people) from His path. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [9]

They do not observe, in the case of a believer, any bond or treaty. And they are the transgressors. [10]

Then, if they repent and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh, they are your brothers in faith. And We elaborate the verses for people who understand. [11]

Commentary

It was said in the first five verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah that, soon after the Conquest of Makkah, general amnesty was granted to all polytheists and disbelievers of Makkah and its environs. But, in view of their dismal record of treachery and breach of trust in the past, it was decided that no treaty would be signed with them in the future. It was despite this policy decision that injunctions to honor the treaty – made with these people earlier and which they had never contravened – were revealed whereby they were required to fulfill the terms of the treaty until it expired. As for those with whom there was just no treaty, or there was no treaty with a fixed duration, they too were granted suitable concession. Rather than they be ordered to leave Makkah immediately, they were allowed a respite of four months so that, during

this period of time, they could arrange to leave Makkah and go wherever they deemed fit, with convenience and in peace. Or, if the truth of Islām had become apparent to them in the meantime, they were welcome to become Muslims. The outcome of these injunctions was that the sacred site of Makkah was to be vacated by all treacherous disbelievers. The evacuation was being implemented without any intention to retaliate. In fact, it was enforced in self-defense because of consistent experience. Therefore, the door to a good future for them was left open even then. This has been mentioned in the sixth verse the substance of which is: If someone from among the disbelievers seeks asylum with you, then, you should grant it so that he could come close to you and listen to the Word of Allah and understand the veracity of Islām. Then, your responsibility does not end at granting him a temporary asylum. The truth of the matter is that, as soon as he has done what he had come for, it is the responsibility of Muslims that they should escort him under full protective arrangements to the place where he considers himself safe and happy. At the end of the verse, it was said that the particular injunction has been sent because these people are not sufficiently aware. By coming close, they could know things better.

Some rulings and points of guidance come out from this verse (11) as well. These have been discussed in details by Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ. In brief, they are:

Proving the Veracity of Islām is the Duty of Muslim Scholars

1. First of all, this verse confirms that, in case, a disbeliever asks Muslims to explain the veracity of Islām to him with valid proofs, then, it becomes their duty to accede to his demand.

2. Secondly, it is obligatory on Muslims that they should allow and protect anyone who comes to them to learn more about Islām. Causing any hurt or harm to such a person is not permissible. This injunction, according to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, is operative only in a situation when the purpose of the visitor is to listen to the Word of Allah and know more about Islām. In case, the objective of the visitor is business, or some other pursuit, it would depend on the discretion of relevant Muslim officials who would decide in terms of what is best in Muslim interests. Should they deem it fit, they may permit and should they think otherwise, they can act at their discretion.

Non-Resident Non-Muslims should not be permitted to stay in Dār al-Islām any longer than necessary

3. The third ruling stipulates that a non-Muslim at war, with whom Muslims have no treaty, should not be allowed to stay any longer than necessary – because, in the cited verse, a limit of stay and protection has been set by saying: حَتّٰى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللّٰهِ (until he listens to the Word of Allah).

4. According to the fourth element of guidance embedded here, it is the duty of a Muslim ruling authority to remain aware of the progress of the mission undertaken by any non-Muslim at war once he has entered into the Muslim country with valid permission (visa) and purpose. And, as soon as he has completed his job in the country, it is also the duty of Muslim *Amīr* (ruler) that he should arrange for his safe return.

Stated in the next four verses (7-10) is the wisdom behind the proclamation of withdrawal mentioned in the initial verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah. Here, by referring to the inherent meanness of pledge-breaking disbelievers whose malice and hostility against Muslims knew no bounds, it was advised in verses 7 and 8 that entertaining any hope from such people that they would ever abide by their pledge was simply wrong to begin with. It was said in the text: Except for some people with whom Muslims had entered into a treaty near the *masjid al-ḥarām*, how could any pledge given by these disbelievers be credible before Allah and His Messenger? The fact was that they were a set of people who, if given the least opportunity, would not blink about any relationship they had with them or bother to honor the word of promise given by them. The simple reason was that these people had no intention of honoring the treaty even when they were signing it. Their sole purpose was just to placate them. With their hearts set elsewhere, most of them were sinners, compulsive breakers of pledges and practitioners of treachery.

Uphold truth and commit no excess or injustice even against disbelievers is the teaching of Qur'ān

This statement of the Qur'ān provides guidance for Muslims that they should never surrender truth and justice even when they are dealing with confronting enemies. Whenever they have to take up an

issue with them, they are required not to slip into taking exaggerated approaches and stances against them. This is as it has been demonstrated in these verses where full consideration has been given to the case of the disbelievers of Makkah. The fact was that most of them had broken their pledge. Naturally, when something like this happens in that setting, people tend to make a sweeping allegation against everyone. But, the Holy Qur'ān, by saying: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عٰهَدتُّمْ عِندَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (except those with whom you made a treaty near *al-masjid-al-ḥarām*), has exempted those who had not broken their pledge. In fact, it has ordered that Muslims should stay firm on their commitment as long as the others remain committed and faithful to their pledge. The breach of trust committed by other people should in no case influence their stance whereby they themselves may be led to become breakers of the pledge given to them.

Earlier when it was said that disbelieving people had nursed betrayal in their hearts right from the beginning and had no intention of staying faithful to their pledge, an exception was also granted. Similarly, when the text says: أَكْثَرُهُمْ فٰسِقُونَ (Most of them are sinners – 8), it hints that all of them were not like that. There were some nice people among them too, who wanted to stand by their commitment, but they were not heard before others.

This is the same subject the Holy Qur'ān takes up elsewhere saying in very clear terms: لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا (and malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice – 5:8)

After that comes the ninth verse with the reason why these Mushriks were so chronically treacherous and what was it that ailed them. Thus, they too were given a prescription of hope to ponder about so that they could still correct themselves if they chose to. At the same time, Muslims at large were also served with a warning that they should take their guard against the pitfall of treachery and disobedience which had sucked these people in and make a total abstention from this behavior model their distinct life style. The reason is their relentless love of the material. The desire to acquire, possess and expend the limitless range of things of this world had blinded them to the limit that they would not hesitate to sell off the very Words of Allah and their own faith in exchange for paltry gains. This character is, to make an understatement, evil.

Moving on to the tenth verse, the text describes the extreme crookedness of these people by saying: لَا يَرْقُبُوْنَ فِیْ مُؤْمِنٍ اِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً (They do not observe, in the case of a believer, any bond or treaty). The sense is that this was no isolated case of disbelieving people acting treacherously against Muslims to whom they were bound by ties of kinship and treaty obligations. In fact, disbelieving people were a lot who would never consider kinship or pledge as valid grounds when dealing with Muslims.

Given the aforesaid behavior pattern of disbelieving people, it could have been but natural for Muslims to have become disillusioned with them forever and refuse to have any brotherly relationship with them under any condition. Therefore, as the Qur'ānic justice and equity would have it, the eleventh verse gives the following instruction: فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِی الدِّیْنِ (Then, if they repent and establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*, they are your brothers in faith).

Here we are being told that once an enemy – no matter how deadly and no matter how hurtful he has been – becomes a Muslim, things change dramatically. Allah Ta'ālā forgives his past sins, all of them. So, it becomes obligatory on Muslims too that they should forget the past, start afresh, take them as their brothers in faith and do whatever it takes to fulfill the rights enjoined under such relationship.

Three Conditions of Entry into the Islāmic Brotherhood

This verse makes it clear that there are three conditions of entry into the Islāmic brotherhood: (1) Taubah or repentance from Kufr and Shirk, (2) establishment of Ṣalāh and (3) payment of Zakāh – because, 'Īmān (faith) and Taubah (repentance) are concealed matters. Common Muslims cannot find out their reality. Therefore, two of their outward signs were mentioned, that is, Ṣalāh and Zakāh.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'This verse has made the blood of Muslims, who qualify as 'the people of Qiblah,' unlawful (*ḥarām*).' In other words, people who establish Ṣalāh, pay Zakāh and have said or done nothing against Islām as proved against them, shall be taken as Muslims in the matter of all religious injunctions – even though, they may not have true 'Īmān (faith) in their hearts, or have hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

This is the verse Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ had quoted in sup-

port of his declaration of Jihād against those who had refused to pay Zakāh after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The noble Companions before whom he had made this assertion were satisfied with his approach. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of verse 11, the text stresses upon the need to abide by given injunctions, regarding those covered under a treaty and those who have repented, by saying: وَنُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (And We elaborate the verses for people who understand).

Verses 12 – 16

وَاِنْ نَّكَثُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ
فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۙ اِنَّهُمْ لَآ اَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾
اَلَا تُقَاتِلُوْنَ قَوْمًا نَّكَثُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوْا بِاِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَهُمْ
بَدَءُوْكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۭ اَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَاتِلُوْهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ
وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُوْرَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَيُذْهِبْ
غَيْظَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ وَيَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تُتْرَكُوْا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ
جٰهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا رَسُوْلِهٖ وَلَا
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلِيْجَةً ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

And if they break their oaths after they have made a covenant and speak evil of your Faith, then fight the leaders of infidelity – in fact, they have no oaths – so that they may stop. [12] **Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and conspired to expel the Messenger and it was they who started (fighting) against you for the first time? Do you fear them? Then, Allah is worthier that you fear Him, if you are believers.** [13]

Fight them, so that Allah should punish them at your hands and disgrace them, and help you win against them and bring relief to bosoms of a believing people, [14] **and remove the rage of their hearts. And Allah relents to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is (All-) Know-**

ing, (All-) Wise. [15]

Do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not yet seen those of you who struggle in *jihād* and never take anyone, other than Allah and His Messenger and the believers, as their confidant? And Allah is (All-) Aware of what you do. [16]

Commentary

It will be recalled that a cease-fire agreement with the Quraysh of Makkah was concluded at Ḥudaibiyah in the Hijrah year 6. That the Quraysh will not stick to the agreement was foretold in verse 7 of Sūrah Al-Taubah: كَيْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ عَهْدٌ (how can the Mushriks have a treaty...). Then, came verses 8, 9 and 10 with the causes of their pledge breaking. And in the 11th verse it was announced that, despite having broken their solemn covenant, if these Mushriks become Muslims and start expressing their faith in Islām through prayers and fasting, then, Muslims are duty-bound to keep their present dealings with them free of any effects from the past. In fact, they should take them to be their brothers in faith and treat them as such. In verse 12 cited above, Muslims have been told about the course of action they should take in the event these people do break their pledge, as prophesied earlier.

The actual words of the text read: وَاِنْ نَّكَثُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَىِٕمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ (And if they break their oaths after they have made a covenant and speak evil of your Faith, then fight the leaders of infidelity – 12). It is worth noting that the present situation in the text demanded the use of فَقَاتِلُوْهُمْ (*faqātilūhum*: then fight them). The Holy Qur'ān has said: فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَىِٕمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ (then fight the leaders of infidelity) which bypasses the use of a shorter pronoun at this place. The word: اَىِٕمَّة (*a'immah*: leaders) is the plural of Imām. The sense is that these people by breaking their word of honor turned into leaders of infidelity and thus became deserving of a war against them. This statement also carries the wisdom and justification of the command to fight. Some commentators say that 'leaders of infidelity' at this place refers to the chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh in Makkah who kept on instigating people against Muslims and remained busy making war preparations. Fighting against them was particularly mentioned because these people were the real source of power the Makkans were credited with. In addition to that, since they were the ones with whom Muslims had bonds of close kinship, there was the possible apprehension that some conces-

sion could be granted in their case.

Honest critical study of Islām by Protected Non-Muslim Citizens of Dār al-Islām is possible – vilification is not

Some commentators have interpreted the words: طَعَنُوْا فِىْ دِيْنِكُمْ (speak evil of your faith) to mean that speaking evil of the Faith of Muslims is included under contravention of pledge. A person who speaks evil of Islām and the Sharī'ah of Islām cannot continue to be a party to the treaty with Muslims. But, according to a consensus of Muslim jurists, it means vilification that is done to insult and belittle Islām and Muslims, openly and publicly. Honest intellectual criticism while conducting research into problems and rulings remains exempt from its purview – then, it is not supposed to be vilification in its lexical sense.

Therefore, for non-Muslim citizens of Dār al-Islām, any honest intellectual criticism can be allowed, but what cannot be allowed is vilification, contempt, insult or outrage against Islām.

In the same verse (12), it was said: إِنَّهُمْ لَآ أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ (in fact, they have no oaths). The sense is that these are the kind of people none of whose oaths are trustworthy – because, they are addicted to breaking their oaths and committing breaches of trust. Then, the use of the plural form of oaths here could also mean: 'when they broke their oath, they also absolved Muslims of any responsibility for their oath and pledge.'

At the end of verse 12, it was said: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُوْنَ (so that they may stop). This last sentence tells us that the objective of Jihād carried out by Muslims should never be the conquest of countries like common kings or to hurt the enemy and to take vengeance as belligerent people around the world would love to do. Instead of doing anything like that, when it comes to fighting that they must, the driving objective should be compassion for the enemy, the empathy and the desire that they would stop doing what was not right.

After that, to persuade Muslims to fight, they were told in verse 13 that there was no reason why they would not be ready to fight against the kind of people who had conspired to expel the Messenger of Allah. This refers to the Jews of Madīnah who had hatched a plan to expel the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from the city of Madīnah. They had said: لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ (the one having more honor and power will cer-

tainly expel the one being humble and weak from there – 63:8). In their self-view, they were the people of honor and power while Muslims were weak and lowly. The answer they needed was given by Allah Almighty in His way. He took their proud statement as it was and made it come true in a manner that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions, by turning the Jews out of Madīnah, proved that honor belonged to Muslims and disgrace to Jews.

Giving the second reason for fighting against them, it was said: وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (and it was they who started [fighting] against you for the first time). The sense is that they were the aggressors. What Muslims have to do now is simply to defend themselves, an action universally sane and normal.

Then, to remove the awe of the enemy from the hearts of Muslims, it was said: أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ (Do you fear them? Then, Allah is worthier that you fear Him) for there is no power that can cause His punishment to disappear. Finally, by saying: إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (if you are believers), it was made clear that fearing anyone or anything other than Allah in a manner that obstructs the fulfillment of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām is not what a true believing-practicing Muslim would do.

For Muslims, the same exhortation to fight in Jihād appears in verses 14 and 15 as well, though from a different angle. They were told:

1. If you get ready to fight them, the help and support from Allah will be with you. As for their enemies, they have already become deserving of Divine punishment because of their evil deeds but this punishment will not come down upon them from the heavens or up from beneath the Earth. Instead of that, says the verse: يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ that is, 'Allah shall punish them at their hands.'

2. As a result of this fighting, Allah Ta'ālā will mollify the hearts of Muslims after all those pains and sorrows continuously inflicted upon them by the disbelievers.

3. Then, the anger which filled Muslim hearts because of their treachery and pledge breaking was to be removed by Allah Ta'ālā when He punishes them at their hands.

In the previous verse (12), by saying: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ (so that they may stop), Muslims were told that they should not fight a people just to re-

lease their anger, rather make their correction and betterment the main purpose of their action. When they cleanse their intention from all irrelevant shades, and let it be for Allah alone, and fight for none but Allah, then, Allah Taʻālā shall cause things to unfold in a manner that automatically removes the feelings of anger and sorrow raging in their hearts.

4. Finally, it was said: وَيَتُوبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (And Allah relents to whomsoever He wills –15). This tells us that there will be an added gain as a result of this Jihād. There will be many from among the enemies who will have the *taufīq* of Islām. They will become Muslims. So, there were many arrogant ones at the time of the Conquest of Makkah who were put to disgrace while there were many others who embraced Islām.

History proves that the circumstances and events predicted in these verses were witnessed one by one as pointed out by the Holy Qur'ān. Therefore, these verses contain many miracles.

Verses 17 – 18

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يَّعْمُرُوْا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ شٰهِدِيْنَ عَلٰٓى
اَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ ۚ وَفِى النَّارِ هُمْ
خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ
الْاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰٓى
اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

It is not for the Mushriks to build up the mosques of Allah while they are witnesses of their own infidelity. Those are the ones whose deeds have gone waste. And in the Fire they shall remain for ever. [17]

In fact, the mosques of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and those who establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh* and who fear none but Allah. So, it is in all likelihood that they are to be among those on the right path. [18]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how crooked the Mushriks of Makkah were, how they broke their pledges and what they did to de-

fend their false ways in religion. With this in view, Muslims were also brought around to stand up against them. In the last previous verse (16), Muslims have been told that Jihād is a test for them. This test is necessary because it helps in marking out a sincere Muslim from hypocrites and the weak-in-faith. Says the verse: 'Do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not seen those of you who struggle in *jihād* and never take anyone, other than Allah and His Messenger and the believers, as their confidant?'

The address in this verse is also to those common people who were taken to be Muslims, though some of them were hypocrites while some others were weak in faith and kept wavering. Such people would pass on sensitive information about Muslims to their non-Muslim friends. Therefore, two signs of a sincere Muslim were identified in this verse.

Two signs of sincere Muslims

(1) They fight disbelievers in the way of Allah.

(2) They take no non-Muslim as their close friend to whom secrets are confided.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (And Allah is [All] Aware of what you do) that is, before Him nobody can get away with false excuses and alibis.

This wisdom of Jihād mentioned earlier has appeared in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān in the following words: اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْٓا اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ (Do people think that they will be left to say, "We believe," and they will not be tried? – 29:2)

On taking non-Muslims as close friends and insiders

The word: وليجة (*walījah*) used in verse 16 means an insider who shares secrets. There is another verse which uses the word: بطانة (*biṭānah*) to carry this very sense. Literally, '*biṭānah*' means what is worn under normal clothing and is close to the body. It denotes a person who knows secrets as an insider. The actual words of the verse read: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَاْلُوْنَكُمْ خَبَالًا (O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves for they would spare no effort to put you in trouble). (3:118)

Now we can turn to the present verses (17 and 18) where instructions have been given to cleanse *al-masjid-al-ḥarām* and other *masājid*

(mosques) of false modes of worship and replacing them with what is correct and acceptable.

A little background detail is in order at this point. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم got rid of all those idols the Mushriks used to worship from the Baytullah and the Sacred Mosque soon after the conquest of Makkah, it was a matter of relief, at least externally, for the Sacred Mosque was now free from the physical vestiges of Shirk. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had granted his old enemies pardon and protection soon after they were overpowered. They still used to do their 'Ibādah and Ṭawāf in the Sacred Mosque following their false ways.

That the Sacred Mosque was cleansed of idols was good, but it was also necessary to purify this sacred site from the fallout of idolatry and its false mores. The only way it could be done was to prohibit the entry of the Mushriks into the Sacred Mosque. But, this would have gone against the promise of protection given to them – and abiding by the terms of a treaty was far more important in Islām. Therefore, such orders were not given immediately. Instead, it was done in the year next to the conquest of Makkah. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه make an announcement in the great gathering of Minā and 'Arafāt that, in the future, no 'Ibādah, Ḥajj or Ṭawāf performed in the Mushrik way will be allowed in the Sacred Mosque. Also prohibited through this announcement was the evil custom of making Ṭawāf in the nude that had lingered from the days of Jāhiliyah. It was in the gathering at Minā that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه proclaimed:

لَا يَحُجَّنَّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ وَلَا يَطُوفَنَّ بِالْبَيْتِ عُرْيَانٌ

After this year, no Mushrik will perform Ḥajj and no naked person will make Ṭawāf of Baytullah.

And this respite of one year was given for the reason that there were many people among them with whom Muslims had a treaty and they had continued to abide by the terms of the treaty. That they should be made to obey a new law before the expiry of the existing treaty with them was contrary to Islāmic policy of tolerance. Therefore, a public announcement was made a year in advance to the effect that it has been decided to cleanse the Sacred Mosque from all Mush-

rik customs and ways of worship – because, their kind of worship would not let a mosque flourish, rather would go on to make it desolate.

These Mushriks of Makkah equated their pagan customs with 'worship' and thought that they were contributing towards the maintenance and functional thriving of the Sacred Mosque. They were proud of being the custodians of the Baytullah and the Sacred Mosque. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'when his father, before he became a Muslim, was taken prisoner at the battle of Badr, Muslims reproached him for staying on the side of Kufr and Shirk. He told them, 'you only remember what is bad about us. You do not like to talk about our good things. Do you not know that we are the custodians of the Sacred Mosque? We take care of the building. We keep it filled with people. We manage it and we run a drinking water service for the pilgrims. Revealed thereupon were the verses: مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ أَنْ يَّعْمُرُوْا مَسٰجِدَ اللهِ (It is not for the Mushriks to build up the mosques of Allah). It means that Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) do not have the right to build and populate the mosques of Allah. The reason is that a *masjid* is a place that has been built to worship One God while Shirk and Kufr are its antithesis that cannot be combined with the structure and function of a *masjid*.

The word: عمارة (*'imārah*: building) appearing in this verse is a multifaceted word and is used to convey several meanings. It could mean the physical building of the *masjid* including all elements that go in raising and finishing it externally and internally. Then, it could also denote the maintenance of the *masjid* that would be inclusive of security arrangements, sanitation, upkeep and provision of necessary supplies. And then, it also includes the human dimension of the *masjid* – that believers present themselves in the *masjid* for 'Ibādah. (Since there is no exact equivalent in English to carry this sense, the nearest one could come would be to populate, people, fill up, make the *masjid* flourish in the number of those present and in the quality of acts of 'Ibadah they perform therein.) Incidentally, 'Umrah (عمرہ) is called by that name in view of the fact that one visits Baytullah and makes the best of his presence there in terms of 'Ibādah.

So, the sense of the Qur'ānic word *'imārah'* covers building, maintenance and presence. The Mushriks of Makkah took credit for all three.

They took special pride in considering themselves the custodians of the building of the Sacred Mosque. The present verses tell them that the Mushriks did not have any right to build the mosques of Allah while they were witnesses of their own infidelity. Because of their Kufr and Shirk, their deeds had gone waste and they were to live in the Fire of Jahannam eternally.

The expression: 'witnesses of their own infidelity' could have two meanings. It could either mean that they were virtually confessing to their Kufr and Shirk because of what they were doing as Mushriks. Or, it could refer to their implied confession and witnessing of their Kufr and Shirk when they identify themselves in social situations. Customarily, when a Christian or Jew is asked as to his religious identity, he would say that he was a Christian or Jew. The same would be the case with a fire-worshipper or idolater. They would identify themselves with what they believe in. Thus, the Mushriks will become witnesses of their infidelity against themselves. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verse 17 was describing the negative aspect as related to the Mushriks. It said that they did not deserve the honor of building and maintaining mosques. Verse 18 takes up the positive aspect relating to mosques by saying:

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ
وَلَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰٓى اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ

In fact, the mosques of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and those who establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and who fear none but Allah. So, it is in all likelihood that they are to be among those on the right path.

It means the building of mosques in the real sense is a serene task. It can be done only by those who are bound by the commandments of Allah in their 'Aqīdah (faith) and 'Amal (practice). They must believe in Allah and in the 'Ākhirah, establish Ṣalāh, pay Zakāh and fear none but Allah. At this place, only 'Īmān (faith) in Allah and 'Ākhirah (Last Day) have been mentioned. Faith in the Rasūl (Messenger) of Allah was not mentioned expressly because there is no way one can have faith in Allah Ta'ālā except that one puts his or her faith in His Rasūl – and wholeheartedly accepts the commandments that come from Al-

lah Ta'ālā through him. Therefore, 'faith in the Rasūl' is naturally included under 'faith in Allah.' This is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once asked his noble Companions, 'Do you know what 'Īmān in Allah is?' The Companions said, 'Allah and His Rasūl know best.' He said, 'Īmān in Allah is that one bears witness to the fact that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Rasūl of Allah.' This Ḥadīth clearly states that having faith in the Rasūl is included under having faith in Allah and is comprehensively united with it. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

As for the statement: 'fear none but Allah,' it means that, in matters of religion, one should not abandon the command of Allah out of some fear. Otherwise, fearing things that cause fear is quite natural. Beasts, snakes, thieves and robbers generate physical fear but that is not the kind of fear we are talking about here. When the magicians showed snakes made of ropes and staffs to Sayyidnā Mūsā, عليه السلام he had a sense of fear within himself as mentioned in the Qur'ān: فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُّوسَىٰ. – 20:67. Therefore, the normal fear caused by what causes pain or brings loss is neither contrary to the injunction of the Qur'ān nor to the station of a prophet, *walīyy* or saint. However, one should not become so overcome by this fear as to start creating confusion about the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā or leaving them out altogether. This is not the style of a true believer and this is precisely what is meant at this place.

Some related issues

When it is said in the present verses that Mushriks and Kāfirs cannot take up the task of 'maintaining' a *masjid* which was something only righteous Muslims could do, it refers to the trusteeship and administrative responsibility of the *masājid*. The outcome is that it is not permissible to appoint a Kāfir the trustee and administrator of any Islāmic Waqf (endowment). As for the construction of the different units of the structure such as walls and doors, it does not matter even if some non-Muslim is assigned to do the job. (Tafsīr Marāghī) Similarly, when a non-Muslim makes a *masjid* as an act of *thawāb*, or contributes funds for its building, then, it is permissible to accept it. However, the condition is that there should be no danger of a religious or worldly loss, or blame, or usurpation of the property later, or harping on the favor done. (Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Shāmī and Marāghī)

It was hinted in verse 18 that building a *masjid* and making it throb with multitudes of Muslims making prayers, remembering Allah and reciting the Qur'ān is a task that can only be accomplished by a righteous Muslim. It proves that anyone who keeps coming to the *masjid* either to supervise arrangements for the security, maintenance, upkeep and supplies for the *masjid*, or for the *Dhikr* of Allah, or to learn about his religion, or to recite or teach the Holy Qur'ān is a perfect believer. These deeds are sufficient as witnesses to this honor.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'when you notice that a person is punctual with his presence in the *masjid*, bear witness to his 'Īmān – because, Allah Ta'ālā has said: إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ (In fact, the *masājid* of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah... - 18). Imām Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah have reported this Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī.

It appears in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'a person who presents himself in the *masjid* morning and evening, Allah Ta'ālā sets aside a rank of Paradise for him.'

And Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farisī narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'a person who comes into the *masjid* is a visiting guest of Allah Ta'ālā – and it is incumbent on the host that He honors the guest.' (Maẓharī with reference to Ṭabarānī, Ibn Jarīr, al-Baihaqī and others)

The commentator of the Qur'ān, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Pānīpat has said, 'the expression 'maintenance of the *masājid*' also requires that the *masjid* should be cleansed of things and practices for which it was not made. It includes activities like buying and selling, worldly conversation, search of lost property, asking people for material help, recitation of idle poetry, disputation, fighting, disturbing peace by noises and things like that. (Maẓharī)

Verses 19 – 23

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَآجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَجٰهَدَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ط لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ط
وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا
وَجٰهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ لا اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ

اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ
وَرِضْوَانٍ وَّجَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَعِيْمٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ
اَبَدًا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا
تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَاِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى
الْاِيْمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Have you taken the serving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* as equal to (the acts) of one who believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and takes up Jihād in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path. [19]

Those who believed and emigrated and took up Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah, and they are the successful ones. [20]

Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from Him, and Pleasure, and of Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them, [21] **where they shall dwell forever. Surely, it is Allah with whom there is a great reward.** [22]

O those who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as your friends, if they prefer infidelity to Faith. And whoever from you has friendship with them, then such people are the wrongdoers. [23]

Commentary

The first four verses (19 - 22) relate to a particular event. A cursory look into its background shows that many Mushriks of Makkah felt proud that they kept the Sacred Mosque bustling with visitors and devotees and ran a drinking water service for the pilgrims. Keeping their rival Muslims in view, they claimed that no deed by anyone could match theirs. When Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ came to Muslims as a prisoner from the battle of Badr, he had not embraced Islām by that time. His Muslim relatives reproached him for remaining deprived of the blessing of 'Īmān. In response, he too had said the same things, 'you think 'Īmān and Hijrah are big feathers in your cap, but we too

have our own assets. We are the custodians of the building of the Sacred Mosque and serve water to the pilgrims. No deed by anyone can match these.' Revealed thereupon were these verses. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥah from Ibn 'Abbās)

And according to some narratives in the Musnad of 'Abd al-Razzāq, it was after the entry of Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ into the fold of Islām that Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ibn Shaybāh, Sayyidnā 'Abbās and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہم were talking together. Ṭalḥah said: 'I enjoy an excellence which none of you do. I have the keys to the Baytullah in my hands. If I wish I could go inside it and spend the night there.' Sayyidnā 'Abbās said: 'I am the administrator of the water service for pilgrims and I have rights to the Sacred Mosque.' Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'I do not understand that which makes you so proud. As for me, I have said my prayers facing the Baytullah six months before anyone of you and I have participated in Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.' Thereupon, these verses were revealed. They made it clear that no deed done without 'Īmān, no matter how merit worthy, carries any value in the sight of Allah, and no doer of such deeds, while still involved in Shirk, is acceptable with Him.

And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports an event on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr رضی اللہ عنہ who says that he was sitting with some Companions close to the Mimbar of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in his Mosque on a Friday. Someone from those present there said, 'In my view, after Islām and 'Īmān, there is no deed superior to serving water to the pilgrims and I do not care about any deed other than this.' Someone else retorted, 'no, Jihād in the way of Allah is the highest of all deeds.' When an argument started between those two, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ reprimanded both of them and said, 'stop quarreling near the Mimbar of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The proper thing to do is to say your Jumu'ah prayer first, then you can go and ask the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself about it.' As suggested, they did go to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to find out his opinion on the matter. Thereupon, these verses were revealed where Jihād has been identified as the deed superior to the 'building' of the Sacred Mosque and the serving of water to pilgrims.

There is nothing far out about the possibility that the revelation of the verses themselves may have been aimed as an answer to the pride

and arrogance of the Mushriks. Later, when unpleasant things took place among Muslims, it is quite possible that the same verses were used as the deciding argument – which might have given the listeners the feeling that these particular verses were revealed in the background of that particular event.

However, the present *'āyāt* of the Qur'ān carry an answer to both these kinds of events – that an accomplishment, no matter how good and acceptable, is reduced to zero if it smacks of Shirk. Therefore, no Mushrik is superior to Muslims because of his association with the maintenance of the Mosque or the serving of water to pilgrims. And even after their rejection of disbelief and entry into Faith, the status of 'Īmān and Jihād is much higher than the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque and the serving of water to pilgrims. Muslims who took the initiative in 'Īmān and Jihād are superior to Muslims who did not take part in Jihād and remained rendering these services to the Sacred Mosque and the pilgrims.

After these introductory remarks, let us go back to the words of the verses and their translation once again. It reads:

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ .

Have you taken the serving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* as equal to (the acts) of one who believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and takes up jihād in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah – 19)

Seen contextually, the purpose is to urge that each one from 'Īmān and Jihād is superior to the serving of water to pilgrims and the maintenance of the Mosque, that is, 'Īmān too is superior to both, and Jihād too. Thus, the superiority of 'Īmān provides an answer to what the Mushriks said and the superiority of Jihād corrects Muslims who said that maintaining the Mosque and serving water to pilgrims were superior to Jihād.

The Dhikr of Allah is superior to Jihād

Qāḍī Thanā'ullah has said in Tafsīr Maẓharī, 'the precedence given to Jihād over the maintenance of the Mosque has been done in terms of physical and outward maintenance, that is, the building, repair,

cleaning and allied arrangements – for it goes without saying that Jihād takes precedence over these.'

But, the maintenance (*'imārah)* of the *masjid* is not restricted to this sense alone. It has another meaning also, that of being present in the *masjid* for 'Ibādah and Dhikr of Allah, which also applies here strongly. In fact, the genuine flowering of the objective of making, maintaining and manning the *masjid* with eager devotees comes out from this factor alone. Given this sense, the maintenance of the *masjid* – as very clearly stated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – is superior to Jihād. To substantiate, we can refer to the report of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah. According to this report, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'should I not tell you about an act that is superior to all your acts and certainly more so in the sight of your Master? – This act would raise your ranks to the highest levels, would be even superior to spending gold and silver in the way of Allah, and still be way superior to that you bravely fight your enemies in Jihād where you kill them and they kill you?' The noble Companions said, 'Do tell us about that act, *Yā Rasūlallāh*.' He said, 'that act is the Dhikr of Allah.' This tells us that the merit of the Dhikr of Allah is more pronounced than that of Jihād also. And if the 'maintenance of the *masjid*' is taken in the sense of the Dhikr of Allah, then, it is superior to Jihād. But, at this place, the pride shown by the Mushriks was not based on the Dhikr of Allah and the 'Ibādah performed in the *masjid*, instead, it was based on its structural and administrative aspects. Therefore, Jihād was deemed as superior to that.

And when we deliberate into different statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah as a whole, it appears that the phenomena of the superiority of one act over the other depends on attending conditions and circumstances. There are conditions when one act is superior to the other. With a change in conditions, things could be the other way round. When Islām and Muslims must be defended at all costs, at that time Jihād shall definitely be more merit worthy as compared to all 'Ibādāt – as evident from the event of the battle of Khandaq where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had to miss four of his daily prayers (*qaḍā*). Conversely, when the need is not so acute, the Dhikr of Allah and 'Ibādah will be more merit worthy as compared to Jihād.

At the end of the verse (19), by saying: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path), it was pointed out that the thing they were being told about was not difficult to understand. In fact, it was clear, as clear as it can be – that 'Īmān is the foundation of all that is done, and is superior to all of them. Then comes Jihād that is superior as compared to the maintenance of the *masjid* and serving water to pilgrims. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not bless the unjust and the wrongdoing with the gift of understanding. Therefore, they keep at their crooked hairsplitting into things that are otherwise very open and obvious.

Verse 20 enlarges upon the subject initiated with the words: لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ (*lā yastawūn*: they are not equal) in the previous verse (19) where it was said that the believing Mujāhidīn and those engaged only in maintaining the *masjid* and serving water to pilgrims are not equal. This was enlarged by saying: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ (those who believed and emigrated and took up *jihād* in the way of Allah, with their wealth and lives, are greater in rank in the sight of Allah, and they are the successful ones). The reason is that the Mushriks against them simply had no measure of success whatsoever. As for Muslims in general, they too shared this success in essence, but the success of those identified above had more to it. Therefore, they were the ones whose success was comprehensive.

Verses 21 and 22 tell us about the great reward and ranks these successful people shall have in the life to come:

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَّجَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَعِيْمٌ مُّقِيْمٌ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ
اَبَدًا ، اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ .

> Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from Him, and Pleasure, and of Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them, where they shall dwell for ever. Surely, it is Allah with whom there is a great reward.

These verses mention the merits of Hijrah and Jihād which require that one leaves his country, relatives, friends, companions, wealth and property, all in one stroke. As obvious, surrendering all these attachments is most difficult and painful. Therefore, in the next verse (23), the text disapproves of limitless attachment with these things and thereby prepares Muslim minds to welcome Hijrah and Jihād. It was

said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَاِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْاِيْمَانِ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ .

O those who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as friends, if they prefer infidelity over Faith. And whoever from you has friendship with them, then such people are the wrongdoers.

As for the need to maintain strong bonds of kinship with parents, brothers and sisters and other kinsfolk and to treat all of them generously, the Qur'ān remains full of relevant instructions. But, this verse has made it very clear that each relationship has a limit. Every relationship out of these, whether that of parents and children or that of real brother and sister, has to be bypassed when it stands in competition with one's relationship with Allah and His Messenger. Should these two relationships come on a collision course on some occasion, then, the relationship that has to be kept intact is one's relationship with Allah and His Messenger. All relationships competing against it are to be ignored.

Some special notes and rulings

Some special notes and rulings emerging from verses 19 – 23 are being given below:

1. 'Īmān (faith) is the moving spirit of *'Amal* (deed). A deed devoid of it, no matter how good, is nothing but a lifeless form, and simply unacceptable. It has no worth in terms of the salvation in the Hereafter. Of course, there is no injustice with Allah Ta'ālā. He would not let even good deeds of disbelievers that are devoid of the essential light of faith go waste in toto. Their return is given to them right here in this world of their experience. They are given possessions and wealth to procure articles and means of comfort and self-satisfaction as desired. Thus, their account stands all settled, something the Holy Qur'ān takes up in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

2. Sin and disobedience spoil human reason. One starts taking good as bad and bad as good. The statement: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path -19) releases a hint in this direction. Similarly, it has been counterbalanced in another verse of the Qur'ān by saying: اِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا: "O those who

believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong) – 8:29." This gives a clear indication that the attitude of obeying Allah and fearing Him gives polish and luster to human reason, balance and poise to thinking and a never-failing ability to distinguish between good and bad.

3. Even good deeds have a mutual rivalry for precedence. Correspondingly, the same element of precedence operates in the ranks of those who do good deeds. All doers of deeds cannot be placed in the same rank since things depend, not on abundance, but on the quality of deeds. It was said in Sūrah al-Mulk: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (so that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed – 67:2).

4. For blessings to remain everlasting two things are necessary – that there is no end to them and that they are not separated from those who are blessed with them. Therefore, a guarantee was given to the favored servants of Allah on both counts. By saying: نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ (Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them -21), it was declared that the blessings were eternal. Then, by saying: خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ أَبَدًا (where they shall dwell forever -22), these successful people were assured that they shall never be separated from these blessings.

The real bond is the bond of Islām and 'Īmān – all bonds of lineage and country must be sacrificed for it

5. The fifth point elaborated here is of basic importance. It settles that the relation with Allah and His Messenger should be given precedence over all relations of kinship and friendship. The relation that clashes against it deserves to be broken. This was the way of the noble Companions. This was why they rose to be the superior most people of the Muslim Ummah. It was some trail they blazed by sacrificing all that was with them, their life, wealth, property, relatives and bonds of all sorts, only for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. That the bond of Islām was supreme and universal stood proved when Bilāl from Ethiopea, Ṣuhayb from Byzantium, Salmān from Persia, the Quraysh from Makkah and the Anṣār from Madīnah became brothers to each other. And that the bonds of lineage and tribe had to be cast aside was also demonstrated when, on the battlefields of Badr and 'Uḥud, swords were crossed between father and son and between brother and brother. These are significant evidences of the creed they held dear.

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا اِتِّبَاعَهُمْ وَاجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ اَحَبَّ الْاَشْيَآءِ اِلَيْنَا وَخَشْيَتَكَ اَخْوَفَ
الْاَشْيَآءِ عِنْدَنَا .

Yā Allah, bless us with the ability to follow them, and make Your love the dearest of everything in our sight and make Your fear the most fear-worthy of everything with us.

Verse 24

قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَاِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُكُمْ
وَعَشِيْرَتُكُمْ وَاَمْوَالُ اِقْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا
وَمَسٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَآ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَجِهَادٍ فِىْ
سَبِيْلِهٖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا حَتّٰى يَاْتِىَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ
الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say, "If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your clan and the wealth you have earned and the trade you apprehend will recede and the homes you like are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and *jihād* in His way, then, wait until Allah comes with His command. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path. [24]

Commentary

This verse of Sūrah al-Taubah was revealed essentially about people who did not migrate from Makkah at the time migration was made obligatory for them. Their love for family and property had stopped them from carrying out their obligation to migrate. In their case, Allah Almighty asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell them what appears in the verse cited above.

As for the statement: "Wait until Allah comes with His command," Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that 'command' referred to here means the command to carry out Jihād and conquer Makkah. The sense of the statement is that the time is near when the evil end of those who sacrifice their relationship with Allah and His Messenger for the sake of worldly bonds shall become visible to all. That is the time when Makkah shall stand conquered, those who chose to discard their appointed duty shall face disgrace and their bonds with people

and things they fancied shall be of no avail to them.

Then, there is the interpretation of the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣri who has said that 'command' at this place means the command of punishment. The sense is that those who sacrificed their spiritual bonds as related to the Hereafter just for the sake of their attachment to what was blandly material and did not migrate as instructed were people who would be seized by the Divine command of punishment fairly soon. Either this punishment would come upon them right here in this mortal world, or they shall have to face the punishment of the Hereafter – which is certain. The purpose at this place is to serve a note of warning against the abandonment of the obligation of migration – but, what has been mentioned here is 'Jihād' and not Hijrah (migration), which is the next step after Hijrah. The hint embedded here is that the real thing has not happened yet. What has come up right now is no more than the initial command to migrate. There are people who did not have the courage to do even that. Ahead of them is the forthcoming command of Jihād following which they would have to surrender all worldly attachments for the sake of love for Allah and His Messenger, even stake their lives for that noble cause. And it is also possible that this may be a place where migration itself has been made to stand for Jihād – because, in reality, that too is nothing but a department of Jihād.

Finally, by saying: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path) at the end of the verse, it was made amply clear that those who, despite the standing command of migration, opted for their temporal relationships and kept clinging to their family, relatives, wealth and property, shall soon find out that this conduct of theirs was not going to serve their purpose even in this mortal world. If they were thinking that they would keep basking in the sunshine of family, wealth and property in everlasting peace and tranquility, then, they would never realize this dream. Once the command of Jihād comes, these very attractions will turn into burdens too cumbersome to go along with – because, Allah Ta'ālā does not allow the sinning and the disobedient to achieve their desired objective.

Standing Rules of *Hijrah* (migration)

1. First of all, when Hijrah from Makkah to Madīnah was made obligatory, it was not simply a matter of obligation, in fact, it was also

a hallmark and a symbol of being a Muslim. Anyone who did not migrate at that time, despite having the ability to do so, was not taken to be a Muslim. This injunction was abrogated after the Conquest of Makkah.

2. After that, the basic injunction which remained operative was: Should there be a land where it is not possible for one to comply with his or her religious obligations, such as praying and fasting in accordance with the injunctions of Allah, migrating from there shall remain a matter of duty (*farḍ*) for ever – on condition that one is capable of undertaking such migration. This is the first degree of compliance.

3. Compliance in the second degree is that one should leave every such place where sin and disobedience have a dominant role in life. This act remains recommended (*mustaḥabb*) for ever. (see details in Fatḥ al-Bārī)

It will be noticed that the address in the verse under study is direct. Those being addressed are people who did not migrate when they were asked to do so because they cared more about their worldly bonds. But, the generality of the words of the verse is telling all Muslims that their love for Allah and His Messenger is obligatory on them in a special degree. That degree is the highest, the foremost. This degree requires that no other bond or love for anything or anyone should ever prevail over it. So, whoever fails to come up with this level of love becomes deserving of punishment from Allah. Let him, then, wait for it.

The Touchstone of True Faith (*'Īmān*)

Therefore, it has been reported in an authentic Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ which appears in the two collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: No one can be a true believer until I become to him dearer than his father, children and everyone else in this world.

According to a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: Anyone who takes a friend or makes an enemy for the sake of Allah or spends his wealth or withholds it for the sake of Allah has made his faith perfect.

These narrations from Ḥadīth prove that perfection of faith de-

pends on the dominance of the love for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم over all other kinds of love, friendship and enmity, concession and reservation – all of which must remain subservient to the will and command of Allah and His Messenger.

Tafsīr authority, Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī and other commentators have said that there are very few people who could be considered exempt from the warning given in this verse. The reason is that even the greatest among those who practice and teach religious percepts and virtues seem to be subdued by their love for family and belongings – of course, with the exception of those Allah wills to be otherwise. However, Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī explains further by saying that 'love' here means love that is within one's control. It has nothing to do with love which one does not control, that which is natural – because Allah Ta'ālā does not obligate anyone beyond one's capacity and control. Therefore, a person may have his heart full of natural love for worldly bonds but he should not let it overpower him to the limit that he starts acting against the will and command of Allah and His Messenger If so, this warning will not apply to him and he will be taken as one who keeps his love for Allah and His Messenger above everything. This is very much like the case of a patient who gets nervous about an unpleasant medicine or unexpected surgery. This is natural. But, he does agree to it rationally since it is for his own good. If so, it is not blameworthy. Then, commonsense never forces him to get rid of his natural nervousness and dislike. Similarly, if someone feels naturally uncomfortable while complying with some Divine injunctions due to his love for wealth and children, yet bears by the discomfort and carries those injunctions out, then, that is not blameworthy either. In fact, it is praiseworthy for he would be regarded as one who keeps his love for Allah and His Messenger on top of everything in the light of this verse.

Nevertheless, as for the high station of love is concerned, there is no doubt about the ideal that love must come to prevail over one's nature as well and go on to turn every discomfort welcome while complying with what your beloved would like you to do. This is not so difficult to comprehend. Think of the seekers of material comfort in this world. Day in and day out, they would embrace the hardest conceivable labor with a smile to get what they want. For a salary check at the end of the month, one would sacrifice sleep, comfort and social relationships.

Honestly or dishonestly, such a seeker would let his desire dominate everything else to achieve his goal.

Moving away from the seekers of the material, let us consider the charisma of the People of Allah. When they seek Allah and His Messenger and the blessings of the-life-to-come, they too reach a station of love which pales out any thoughts of pain and discomfort. According to a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: There are three traits which, if found in a person, would bless him or her with the sweetness of faith. Those three traits are: (1) That Allah and His Messenger are, in his sight, dearer than anything other than them, (2) that one loves a servant of Allah for His sake only, (3) and that the very thought of Kufr and Shirk gives one the feeling of being thrown away into the fire.

The 'sweetness of faith' mentioned in the Ḥadīth quoted above means this very station of love that makes the hardest possible labor most welcome for the true seeker. Love has its own chemistry of turning the sour into the sweet. Some Muslim scholars have pointed out that a heart when enriched with the sweetness of faith starts passing it on to other parts of the body which begin to relish it during acts of worship and obedience. In some reports, the same thing has been equated with the ecstasy of faith – and in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The delight of my eyes is in Ṣalāh.

Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Pānīpat has said in Tafsīr Maẓharī: This station of love for Allah and His Messenger is a great blessing – but, it can be acquired only when one stays close to the People of Allah. It is for this reason that Muslim mystics consider it necessary that it be sought with Shaykhs. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has said that this station of friendship can be acquired by the one who is ready to sacrifice, like Sayyidnā Ibrahīm Khalīlullāh, عليه السلام everything for the love of Allah – wealth, children, life, everything.

Finally, says commentator al-Baiḍāwī: The preservation and protection of the Sunnah and Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the rebuttal of and the defense against those who oppose or malign them is also an open sign of love for Allah and His Messenger.

رزقنا الله تعالى وجميع المسلمين حبّه وحب رسوله كما يحب ويرضاه

May Allah bless us and bless all Muslims with love for Him and

the love for His Messenger.

Verses 25 – 27

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ ۙ وَّيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ اِذْ
اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ
الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُّدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَاَنْزَلَ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا
وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُ
اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields, and on the day of Ḥunain* : (remember) when you were proud of your great number then it did not help you at all, and the earth was straitened for you despite all its vastness, then you turned away on your backs. [25]

Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent down forces which you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers. [26]

Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [27]

Commentary:

Described in the verses cited about are events relating to the scenario of defeat and victory at the battle of Ḥunain. Along with it, several primary and subsidiary problems have also been resolved as a corollary. As the verse opens, Allah Taʿālā mentions His favor and grace which has descended upon Muslims on all occasions and under all conditions. It was said: لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ (Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields). Particularly cited soon after this opener was: وَّيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ (and on the day of Ḥunain) that is, Muslims were blessed with the help of Allah on the day of the battle of Ḥunain as

*. Ḥunain : The name of a place near Makkah, the site of the battle of Ḥunain.

well.

The battle of Ḥunain was specially mentioned because many events and circumstances unfolded unexpectedly and extraordinarily during the course of this encounter. If you were to think about these happenings, you would realize that they make one stronger in faith and bolder in deed. Therefore, before we take up a literal explanation of the verses under study, it is appropriate to describe the major events of this battle. They appear in authentic books of Ḥadīth and history. We are describing them in a somewhat detailed manner so that it becomes easier to understand not only the verses mentioned above but also the lessons that these events teach. The major portion of these events has been taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī. Necessary references to books of Ḥadīth and history may be seen there.

Ḥunain is the name of a place between Makkah al-Mukarramah and Ṭā'if. It is located at a distance of about ten miles from Makkah. When Makkah was conquered in Ramaḍān of Hijrah 8, the Quraysh of Makkah laid down their arms before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This alarmed the tribe of Banū Thaqīf from Ṭā'if who were a branch of the tribe of Hawāzin known all over Arabia as big, brave, rich and warring. They got together and considered the challenge posed by the newly gained strength of Muslims after their conquest of Makkah. Once the Muslims settled down, they concluded, they would turn to them. Therefore, they decided, the wisest course for them was to launch a pre-emptive attack on Muslims much before they came upon them. To carry out this plan, the tribe of Hawāzin brought all its branches spread out from Makkah to Ṭā'if together. Included there were all big and small units of this tribe – except a few individuals who were less than a hundred in number.

The leader of this movement was Mālik ibn 'Awf who became a Muslim later on and rose to be a major standard-bearer of Islām. However, at that particular time, his zeal to attack Muslims was the highest. Going along with him, the overwhelming majority of the tribe started preparing for war. Two small branches of this tribe, Banū Ka'b and Banū Kilāb, did not approve of this action plan. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed them with some foresight. They said: Even if the forces of the whole world from the East to the West came together against Muham-

mad, he would still overcome all of them. We cannot fight the power of God (with him). As for the rest of them, they all gave their pledges to fight. Mālik ibn 'Awf devised a plan to ensure that all of them abided by their commitment to the war. He proposed that all participants should take their families and valuables with them. The catch was that, in case they thought of bolting away from the battlefield, the love of wife, children and things of value with them would hold them back like shackles on their feet and they would be left with no freedom to desert the battlefield. As for their numbers, historians differ. According to the master of Ḥadīth, 'Allāmah ibn Ḥajar and some others, the weightier opinion is that they were twenty-four or twenty eight thousand in number. Some others have given a number of four thousand. It is possible that, with the inclusion of women and children, the total number could be twenty-four or twenty eight thousand while the actual number of fighting men among them remained four thousand.

Anyway, when the news of their dangerous intentions reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah al-Mukarramah, he decided to confront them. He appointed Sayyidnā 'Attāb ibn Asīd as the Amīr of Makkah al-Mukarramah, left Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal behind to teach people Islām, and asked the Quraysh of Makkah for weapons and other war supplies – of course, as a borrowing. The Quraysh chief, Ṣafwān ibn Umaiyyah spoke out: 'Do you want to take this war material forcibly against our will?' He said: 'No, we would rather like to borrow it from you, a borrowing guaranteed to be returned.' After hearing that, he gave one hundred coats of mail and Nawfil ibn Ḥārith offered three thousand spears likewise. According to a narration of Imām Zuhrī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was now ready to launch the Jihād with an army of fourteen thousand Companions – which included twelve thousand Anṣār of Madīnah who had accompanied him for the conquest of Makkah. Then, there were two thousand Muslims who were residents of Makkah and its environs and who had embraced Islām at the time of its conquest. They are known as *'al-ṭulaqā.'* It was on Saturday, the 6th of Shawwāl that he marched out for this battle saying that the next day, *insha'Allah*, they shall be camping at the spot in Khaif banī Kinānah where the Quraysh of Makkah had assembled to write down their pledge to excommunicate Muslims.

As for the army of fourteen thousand Mujāhidīn, it did march out of

the city for Jihād. But, there was another crowd of people – many men and women of the city of Makkah – who also came out of their homes as spectators. Their hearts were excited with conflicting emotions. Speaking generally, if Muslims were to be defeated on this occasion, they thought, they would have a good chance of taking their revenge against Muslims – and if they were to win, they consoled themselves that they were not going to lose anything after all.

Shaibah ibn 'Uthmān was one of these spectators. When he embraced Islām later on, he narrated what had happened to him: 'In the battle of Badr, my father was killed by Ḥamzah and my uncle by Sayyidnā 'Alī. My heart was full of anger. I was bent on taking my revenge. I took advantage of this opportunity and started walking alongside the Muslim forces. The purpose was to find an opportunity and attack the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I kept hanging with them always on the look out for that opportunity until came the time during the initial stage of this Jihād when some Muslims had started losing their ground. When I found them running, I seized the opportunity and reached close to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, I saw that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās was guarding him on the right and Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥārith on the left. Therefore, I dashed towards the rear with the intention of attacking him with my sword all of a sudden. Right then, he happened to look at me and he called out to me: 'Shaibah, come here.' He asked me to come closer. Then, he put his blessed hand on my chest and prayed: 'O Allah, remove the Shaytān away from him.' Now, when I raise my eyes, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم becomes in my heart dearer than my own eye and ear and life. He said to me: 'Go and fight the disbelievers.' Now, there I was staking my life for him, fighting the enemy valiantly right to the end. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from this Jihād, I presented myself before him. At that time, he told me about the thoughts I had when I started off from Makkah with a particular intention and how I was shadowing him in order to kill him. But, since Allah had intended that I must do something good, I did what I did.'

Something similar happened to Naḍr ibn Ḥārith. He too had gone to Ḥunain with the same intention. However, when he reached there, Allah Ta'ālā put in his heart the thought of the innocence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and a feeling of love for him. This turned him

into a valiant Mujāhid who took no time in piercing through the enemy lines.

During the course of this very expedition, yet another event took place. This concerns Abū Burdah ibn Niyār When he reached the place known as Awṭās, he saw that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under a tree and there was someone else with him. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told Abū Burdah that he was sleeping when the man sitting with him came, grabbed his sword, positioned by the side of his head and said: 'O Muḥammad, now tell me who can save you from me?' I said, 'Allah!' When he heard this, the sword fell down from his hands.' Abū Burdah said: 'O Messenger of Allah, please allow me to behead this enemy of Allah, he looks like a spy.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Abū Burdah, say no more. Allah Ta'ālā is my Protector until my religion prevails over all others.' After all that, he uttered not a single word of reproach for that person, in fact, let him go free.

When Muslims camped after reaching Ḥunain, Sayyidnā Suhail ibn Ḥanẓalah came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the news that one of their riders had brought a report that the entire tribe of Hawāzin had arrived with an array of their war materials. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم smiled and said: 'Do not worry. All this material has come as war spoils for Muslims!'

Once settled at the camping grounds, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥaddād to gather intelligence from the area controlled by the enemy. He went there and stayed with them for two days watching all prevailing conditions closely. He saw the enemy leader and commander, Mālik ibn 'Awf and heard him saying to his people: 'Muḥammad has yet to face a nation of experienced warriors. That fight against the innocent Quraysh of Makkah has given him false notions. He has become proud of his power. Now, he will find out where he stands. Let all of you go in battle formation at the early hour of dawn in a manner that each warrior has his wife, children and articles of value behind him. Then, take your swords out of the sheaths, break the sheaths, and attack, all together in one go.' These people were really very experienced in warfare. They had deployed their forces not only openly but secretly too. For example, they had hidden some units of their army in different mountain passes.

This was a view of how the army of disbelievers was getting ready

to fight. On the other side, this was the first Jihād of Muslims in which fourteen thousand fighters had come out to confront the enemy. The war material they had with them was much more than they ever had. Then, they had the experience of Badr and 'Uḥud where they had seen how a negligible number of three hundred and thirteen ill-equipped men had triumphed over a strong army of one thousand well-equipped fighters. Under these circumstances, when they came to think about their numbers and preparations on that day, some unfortunate words - 'today, it is impossible that anyone can defeat us, for today, once the fighting starts, the enemy will run' - were uttered by some of them (as reported by Ḥākim and Bazzār).

This attitude – that someone relies solely on one's own power – was something disliked by the supreme Master of humans, jinns and angels. Hence, Muslims were taught a lesson for their lack of discretion. They got a taste of it when the tribe of Hawāzin, following their battle plan, launched a surprise attack and their army units lurking in mountain passes encircled Muslims from all sides. The dust kicked up by their sudden tactical advance turned the day into night, the Companions lost their foothold and started running. In contrast, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was the lone figure seen advancing on his mount, forward and not backwards. A counted few of his noble Companions – reportedly, three hundred, or even less than one hundred as said by others – did, however, stay with him, but they too wished that he would not continue advancing.

Then, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم realized that the situation was grave. He asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ to call his Companions. These were his Companions who had given him a pledge to fight when they had assembled under the Tree. Then, he pointed out to those who had been mentioned in the Qur'ān as well as to the Anṣār of Madīnah who had promised to stake their lives in this Jihād. He wanted all of them to come back and wanted them to know that the Messenger of Allah was present on the battlefield.

The call given by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ ran through the battlefield like some power current. All deserters were smitten with remorse. They regrouped with fresh vigor and valor and fought against the enemy fully and decisively. First the enemy commander, Mālik ibn 'Awf ran away from the battlefield leaving his fami-

ly and belongings behind and took refuge in the fort of Ṭā'if. After him, the rest of his people deserted the battlefield. Seventy of their chiefs were killed. Incidentally, when some children received wounds at the hands of Muslim soldiers, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took immediate notice and prohibited them sternly against any such action in future. Everything they left fell into Muslim hands. It included six thousand prisoners of war, twenty four thousand camels, forty thousand goats and four thousand 'Ūqiyah* of silver.

The same subject has been taken up in the first (25) and second (26) verses. The gist of what was said there is: 'when you waxed proud of your numbers, it did not work for you and you found yourself all cornered as if the earth was straitened for you despite its vastness. Then, you showed your backs and ran. Then, Allah Ta'ālā sent down upon you His tranquility – sending forces of angels for His Messenger and the believers with him, something you did not see. Thus, the disbelievers were punished at your hands.'

It will be useful to explain the statement: ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers) appearing in verse 26 a little further. It means that Allah Ta'ālā sent down His tranquility upon the hearts of the noble Companions who had lost their foothold on the battlefield during the initial attack of the enemy at Ḥunain. This caused their feet to become firm again and those who had run away came back. As for the sending of tranquility upon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Companions who had stayed on the war front with firmness and determination, it means that they could see victory close at hand. And since the tranquility mentioned here was of two kinds – one for those who ran, and the other for those who stayed on with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with firmness and determination - it is to point out to this refinement that the expressions: عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (...upon His Messenger and upon the believers) have been placed separately and introduced one after the other with the repetition of the preposition على (*'alā*: upon).

After that, it was said: وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا (... and sent down forces which you did not see). This means that the people at large did not see. That some reports mention the 'seeing' of these 'forces' should not be taken

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* 1 *'Uqiyah* = 122.472 grams approximately. (اوزان شرعيه / Muftī Muḥammad Shafī)

as contrary to this.

After that, in conclusion, it was said: وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۚ وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ It means that Allah punished those who disbelieved – and those who disbelieved deserved that punishment. This punishment or recompense refers to their subjugation at the hands of Muslims which was something witnessed openly. In sum, what was their worldly punishment, they received promptly. As for their fate in the Hereafter, it has been mentioned in verse 27: ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful).

A hint has been given here that some people out of those who have received their punishment in the form of defeat at Muslim hands in this Jihād and who still keep adhering to their disbelief will be blessed with the ability to become true believers. The manner in which this happened is given below in some details.

Victory of Ḥunain: Enemy chiefs embrace Islām, Prisoners Return

It will be recalled that some chiefs from the tribes of Hawāzin and Thaqīf were killed in the battle of Ḥunain. Some ran away. Their families became prisoners of war and their properties fell into Muslim hands as spoils that included six thousand prisoners, twenty four thousand camels, more than forty thousand goats and four thousand 'Ūqiyah of silver that equals approximately 489.888 kilograms. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed Sayyidnā Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb as the Custodian of war spoils.

After that, the defeated forces of Hawāzin and Thaqīf tried to regroup at various places to challenge Muslims but at every such place they kept facing defeat. Such was the awe of their victors that they chose to lock themselves up into the strong fortress of Ṭā'if. The Holy Prophet ﷺ put this fortress under siege which lasted up to fifteen or twenty days. The besieged enemy kept shooting their arrows from inside the fortress. They could not muster enough courage to come out in the open. The Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم requested him to pray that some evil befalls these people – but he prayed that they be guided right. Then, he went into consultation with his Companions and decided to return. When he reached Ji'irrānah he intend-

ed to go to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah and perform "Umrah and then return to Madīnah. Many of the Makkans who had come as spectators of Muslim victory or defeat seized the occasion to announce their conversion to Islām.

It was on arrival at this stage of the journey that arrangements were made to distribute spoils. While this distribution was still in process, a deputation of fourteen chiefs of the tribe of Hawāzin led by Zuhayr ibn Ṣurad came in all of a sudden. They had come to pay their respects to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Included in the group was Abū Yarqān, a foster uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who came up to him, told him that they had embraced Islām and requested that their families and properties may be returned to them. The request was made more personal when he reminded the Messenger of Allah that they were related to him through the bond of fosterage and they were in a distress that was no secret for him. So, he pleaded for his favor. The leader of the deputation was a man of poetry. He said: 'O Messenger of Allah, had we presented some such request in a distress like this before the King of Byzantine or Iraq, then they too – we believe – would have not rejected our entreaty. And as for you, Allah has certainly made you the foremost in high morals, so we have come to you with high hopes.'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ who was himself a mercy for the whole world found his difficulty compounded. On the one hand, his inherent mercy for people demanded that all prisoners and properties be returned to them, while on the other, he realized that all Mujāhidīn have a right in spoils and depriving all of them of their due right was not proper in terms of justice. Therefore, according to a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed his companions saying:

> "Here are your brothers. They have repented. I wish that their prisoners should be returned back to them. Those from you who are ready to return their share willingly, and with pleasure, should do so as an act of grace. As for those who are not ready to do so, to them we shall give a proper return for it from the first *Fai'* properties (spoils gained without fighting) that come to us in future."

Seeking of public opinion: The correct method

Voices rose from all sides that they were willing to return all pris-

oners in good cheer but, in view of his concern in matters involving justice, equity and rights, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not consider different voices of this nature as sufficient. He said: I do not know who are those who got ready to surrender their right gladly and who are those who remained silent under pressure. This is a matter of the rights of people. Therefore, every head of a family or chief of a group should go to their respective families and groups, talk to them individually, separately and frankly, and tell him the truth.

Following his wishes, the chiefs went back to their people, met each of them separately, secured their first-hand agreement and reported to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all of them were ready to surrender their rights. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned all those prisoners back to them.

These were the people whose Taubah or repentance was pointed to in verse 27 which begins with the words: ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ (Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills). As for the details of events that came to pass during the battle of Ḥunain, part of it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān while the rest has been taken from authentic narrations of Ḥadīth. (Maẓharī and Ibn Kathīr)

Injunctions and Rulings

Many injunctions, rulings and subsidiary elements of guidance appear here under the shadows of these events. In fact, they are the very purpose of the narration of these events.

The very first instruction given in these verses is that Muslims should never wax proud of their power or numerical superiority. They should realize that the way they look towards Allah and His help at times when they are weak and deficient, very similarly, when they are strong and powerful, their total trust should also remain on nothing but the help of Allah alone.

In the battle of Ḥunain, Muslims enjoyed numerical superiority. They had sufficient weapons and supplies. This led some Companions to utter words of pride to the effect that no one could dare defeat them on that particular day. Allah Ta'ālā did not like that a group of people so dear to him would say something like that. The result was that Muslims lost their foothold on the battlefield at the time the enemy launched the initial attack. They started running. Then, it was only

with unseen help from Allah that this battle was won.

Properties of defeated non-believers:
The need for justice and caution

The second instruction given here relates to the need for observing caution and justice when handling properties owned by non-believers who have been defeated and overpowered. This is illustrated by the action taken by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he had taken war materials for the battle of Ḥunain from the vanquished non-Muslims of Makkah. This was an occasion when these supplies could have been taken from them by force too. But the *Rasūl* of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم took these as borrowing – and then, he returned everything so borrowed back to them.

This event taught Muslims an essential lesson – that they should maintain perfect justice and show mercy and magnanimity even when they are dealing with enemies.

The third instruction is embedded in what he said while making a stopover at Khaif banī Kinānah enroute Ḥunain. 'Tomorrow', he said, 'we shall be staying at a place where our enemies, the Quraysh of Makkah, had once sat and resolved to excommunicate Muslims!' The hint given here is clear – when Allah Ta'ālā has blessed Muslims with victory and power, they should not forget about the days of distress in the past, so that they remain grateful to Allah under all conditions. It will also be recalled that the defeated Hawāzin forces had taken refuge in the Ṭā'if fortress from where they were shooting arrows against Muslims repeatedly. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was requested to pray for a curse to fall on them. He did not respond to their arrows in that manner. He prayed that they be guided to the right path. Being mercy for all the worlds, this prayer for his enemies is teaching Muslims the lesson that Muslims, when they fight in a Jihād, do not intend to subdue the enemy, instead, their objective is to bring them to guidance. Therefore, making efforts to achieve this objective should not be neglected at any time.

The third verse (27) instructs Muslims that they should not write off disbelievers who have been defeated at war because it is likely that Allah Ta'ālā may give them the ability to embrace Islām and be blessed with the light of faith. The Hawāzin deputation's entry into the fold of Islām proves it.

The same deputation from the tribe of Hawāzin had requested the return of their prisoners and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked the gathering of Companions if they agreed to do that out of their free will. The response came in the form of voiced ayes from the audience. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not consider it to be sufficient. Instead, he took elaborate steps to ascertain the approval of each and every individual before he would act.

This proves that the matter of rights is serious. It is not permissible to take what belongs to a person as a matter of right unless it becomes certain that this was done on the basis of his or her free will. The silence of a person either due to the awe of the crowd or the sense of shame before people is not a sufficient proof of the person's free will and heart-felt consent. From here, Muslim jurists have deduced the ruling that it is not correct to solicit contributions even for some religious purpose when it is done to impress a person by one's personal office, power, or influence. The reason is that there are many gentle people who would be affected by such conditions around and decide to get away by giving something just to avoid being embarrassed – of course, this does not have the backing of genuine free will, approval and pleasure. Incidentally, what is given in that spirit does not have any *barakah* either.

Verse 28

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هٰذَا ۚ وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖٓ اِنْ شَآءَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

O those who believe, the Mushriks* are impure indeed, so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs. And if you apprehend poverty, then, Allah shall, if He wills, make you self-sufficient with His grace. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [28]

Commentary

A proclamation of withdrawal was made against Mushriks and disbelievers at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah. The verse appearing

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

above describes injunctions related to this proclamation. In substance, it stipulated that treaties with disbelievers should be terminated or fulfilled within a year and after the passage of one year from this proclamation, no Mushrik should remain within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram.

This has been stated in the present verse in a particular manner that accomplishes two objectives simultaneously. It points out to the wisdom behind this injunction and it also alleviates the apprehensions of some Muslims about its implementation. Here, the word: نجس (*najas*) has been used with *fatḥah* on the letter *jīm* which carries the sense of filth and filth denotes every impurity which one averts naturally. Imām Rāghīb al-Iṣfahānī has said: It also includes impurity that is perceived through the senses, such as the eye, the nose or the hand as well as that which one is able to know about through knowledge and reason. Therefore, the word: '*najas*' is inclusive of filth or impurity of three types. The first one is real. Everyone perceives it as such. Then, there is the second type. This is known as legal because it makes *wuḍū* (ablution) or *ghusl* (bath) legally necessary. Examples are the state of *Janābah* (intercourse, ejaculation, wet-dream etc.), as well as, the post-menstruation and post-childbed states known as *ḥaiḍ* and *nifās*. And then, there is the spiritual impurity that relates to the human heart, for example, false beliefs and evil morals. The word '*najas*' covers all of these.

The word, إنما (*innamā*) introduced in this verse has been used for *ḥaṣr* or restriction. Therefore, the sentence comes to mean that Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) are impure indeed (in the sense of 'are but filth'). The truth of the matter is that all three types of impurities are found in Mushriks because they just do not take a lot of impure things as really impure. The outcome is that they do not make any effort to stay away from smearing themselves with obvious impurities – such as, liquor and things made with it. As for the modalities of purification against acquired impurities provided by religious codes – such as, the prescribed bath after having fallen into the state of Janābah – they simply do not believe in them! Similarly, spiritual impurities like false beliefs and evil morals do not make much sense to them.

Therefore, by declaring Mushriks to be impure in this verse, the in-

junction given was: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَٰذَا (so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs).

The word: *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* is generally used to denote the place that is surrounded by a walled structure around the Baytullah. But, in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, this word, at times, has been used for the sacred precincts of the entire Ḥaram of Makkah as well – which is an area of several square miles and is hemmed in by limits originally appointed by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It is in this very sense that words of the text of the Qur'ān referring to the event of Mi'rāj: مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (from *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* – 18:1) have been taken. This interpretation has the backing of a consensus because the event of Mi'rāj did not originate from inside what is commonly known as *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*, instead of which, it started from the home of Sayyidah Umm Hānī' رضى الله عنها. Similarly, in the noble verse: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (Except those with whom you made a treaty near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* – 9:7), *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* means the whole of Ḥaram – because, the event of making a peace treaty mentioned there took place at Ḥudaibiyah, which is located outside the limits of the Ḥaram close by. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Therefore, the verse comes to mean that the entry of the Mushriks into the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram shall be banned after 'this' year. Which year is 'this' year? Some commentators say that it means the Hijrah year 10. But, according to the majority of commentators, the preferred year is Hijrah 9 – because, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had made the 'proclamation of withdrawal' through Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā Alī رضى الله عنهما during the Ḥajj season of this very Hijrah year 9. Therefore, the period between Hijrah 9 and Hijrah 10 is the year of respite. It was only after Hijrah 10 that this law came into force.

Does the rule stop Mushriks from entering the Sacred Mosque only, or does it apply to all mosques?

About the injunction appearing in the cited verse: that no Mushrik should be allowed to come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* (the Sacred Mosque) after Hijrah 10, three things need consideration. Firstly, we have to determine if this injunction is particular to the Sacred Mosque, or other mosques of the world also fall under its jurisdiction. Secondly, if this is particular to the Sacred Mosque, then, is the entry of a Mushrik in the Sacred Mosque banned in an absolute sense? Or the ban of

such entry applies only in the case of Ḥajj and 'Umrah – not otherwise. Thirdly, this injunction appearing in the verse relates to Mushriks. In that case, are the disbelievers (*kuffār*) among the People of the Book included here, or are they not?

Since the words of the Qur'ān are silent about these details, therefore, the Mujtahid Imāms have, by turning to the hints of the Qur'ān and the reports of Ḥadīth, given a description of injunctions in accordance with their respective Ijtihād. The first investigation in this connection is about the terms of reference in which the Holy Qur'ān has declared Mushriks as '*najas*' (filth). If this means physical filth or some major legal impurity (*janābah* etc.), then, as evident, allowing the entry of filth in any *masjid* is not permissible. Similarly, allowing any person in the state of major impurity or a woman in the state of menstruation or childbed in any *masjid* is not permissible. And if '*najāsah*' in this verse means the spiritual filthiness of *kufr* and *shirk*, then, it is possible that the injunction which covers it may be different from the injunction which covers outward filth.

According to Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī, Imām Mālik and other jurists of Madīnah, may Allah have mercy on them, said: Mushriks are filthy on all counts. They generally do not abstain from obvious filth, are not very particular about taking a bath after having fallen into the state of major impurity and, as for the spiritual impurity of *kufr* and *shirk*, they already suffer from it. Therefore, this injunction is equally applicable to all Mushriks and mosques. To prove this, they have cited an executive order given by Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رضی اللہ عنہ in which he had instructed the administrators of cities that they should not allow disbelievers to enter mosques. He had quoted this very verse as part of his executive order. In addition to that, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in which he said: لَا أُحِلُّ الْمَسْجِدَ لِحَائِضٍ وَ لَاجُنُبٍ (I do not make entry into the *masjid* lawful for any woman in menstruation or for any person in the state of major impurity) – and since the Mushriks and disbelievers do not generally take a bath when in a state of *janābah*, their entry into the *masjid* has been prohibited.

Imām Shāfi'ī has said that this injunction is applicable to all Mushriks and disbelievers among the People of the Book – but, is restricted to the Sacred Mosque. Their entry into other mosques is not prohibited. (Qurṭubī) In proof, he has cited the event relating to Thumāmah ibn

Athāl, according to which Thumāmah was arrested. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had him tied to a pillar of his Mosque before he embraced Islām.

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, not letting Mushriks come near the Sacred Mosque as commanded in the verse means that they will not be allowed to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah in their peculiar polytheistic manner from the next year. Its proof lies in the proclamation of withdrawal which was made through Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه at the time of the Ḥajj season. This proclamation made was for nothing but: لَايَحُجَّنَّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ which made it very clear that no Mushrik will be able to perform Ḥajj after that year. Therefore, the meaning of the statement: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ (so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*) in this verse is – in accordance with this proclamation – nothing but that they have been prohibited to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah, with the exception of entering there on the basis of a particular need which would be subject to the permission of the Muslim 'Amīr. This is proved by what happened in the case of the deputation from the tribe of Thaqīf. When, after the Conquest of Makkah, their deputation came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he let them stay in the *masjid*, although they were *kāfirs* at that time. Thereupon, the Companions submitted: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, these are filthy people!' He said: 'The floor of the *masjid* is not affected by their impurity.' (Jaṣṣāṣ)

This report from Ḥadīth also makes it very clear that the Holy Qur'ān, when it calls Mushriks '*najas*' (filth), it refers to the filth of their *kufr* and *shirk* – as interpreted by the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Similarly, according to a narration of the Companion, Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that no Mushrik should go near the Masjid except that the person be a bondman or bondwoman of a Muslim – then, he could be admitted if needed. (Qurṭubī)

This Ḥadīth too confirms that the Mushriks were not prevented from entering into the Sacred Mosque on the basis of their outward impurity as the cause – otherwise, there was nothing particular about a bondman or bondwoman. In fact, the real basis is the danger of *kufr* and *shirk* lest these come to dominate. In the case of a bondman or bondwoman, this danger does not exist. So, they were allowed. In addition to that, as far as outward impurity is concerned, even Muslims

stand included under this restriction for they too, if in a state of full impurity (*janābah* or *ḥaiḍ* or *nifās*), are not allowed to enter the Sacred Mosque.

Besides, when according to the explanation given by the majority of commentators, *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* at this place means the entire Ḥaram, then, that too lends support to the view that this prohibition is not based on outward impurity, instead, it is based on the impurity of *kufr* and *shirk*. It is for this reason that their entry was banned not simply in the Sacred Mosque, in fact, it was banned in the entire area known as the Ḥaram. This was done because the Ḥaram is the sanctuary and fortress of Islām and having some non-Muslim inside it cannot be tolerated.

To sum up the investigative approach of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, it can be said that the concern for maintaining *masājid* in a state of perfect purity, free from all sorts of outward and inward pollution, is an issue of major importance having its proof from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, this verse is not connected with this problem. It is, in fact, connected with the particular political order of Islām that was announced at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah and wherein the purpose was to have the sacred Ḥaram vacated by all Mushriks present in Makkah. But, such was the dictate of justice and mercy that all of them were not ordered to vacate immediately and en-block soon after the Conquest of Makkah. Instead of that, the plan was to be implemented within the time-span of one year by allowing people who had a treaty for a specified period to complete that period subject to its solemn fulfillment and by giving others available periods of respite. This is what was stated in the verse under study – that the entry of Mushriks will stand prohibited within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram after that year and they would no more be able to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah in their polytheistic style.

After it was clearly stated in the *'āyāt* of Sūrah Al-Taubah that no Mushrik would be able to enter the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram after Hijrah 9, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had increased this injunction to cover the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. Ḥadīth reports confirm it but its implementation could not take effect during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Then, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه remained unable to attend to it because of other emergent problems on

hand. It was Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ who, during his period, put this legal order in force.

As for the problem of the impurity of disbelievers and the problem of keeping *masājid* secured from impurities of all kinds, that has its own place. These problems and their solutions have been taken up in books of Fiqh (Islāmic Jurisprudence). Details can be seen there. In brief, no Muslim can enter any *masjid* in the state of *najāsah* or *janābah*. As for disbelievers and Mushriks or the People of the Book, they too are not generally free and duly purified from these impurities, therefore, their entry too is not permissible in any *masjid*, unless needed acutely.

When, according to this verse, the entry of Kāfirs and Mushriks into the Ḥaram was banned, Muslims had to face an economic problem. Makkah had no produce of its own. Visitors from far and near brought the needed supplies with them. Thus, during the Ḥajj season, the people of Makkah found what they needed available locally. Now that their entry was banned, the Makkans worried, how things would work for them. In response, they were told in the Qur'ān: وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ (And if you apprehend poverty, then, Allah shall, if He wills, make you self-sufficient with His grace). In other words, the sense is: if you foresee any economic hardships, then, you must realize that the economic support of the entire creation rests with Allah Almighty. If He wills, He shall make you self-sufficient, free from any dependence on all those *kāfirs*. Incidentally, the restriction of 'if He wills' placed here does not mean that there is any doubt or hesitation in carrying out the Divine will. On the contrary, this is to point out that those who have their sights trained on nothing but material causes find it very difficult to understand and accept a situation like this. Here, the ground reality was that these non-Muslims were the apparent source of all economic support. Putting a ban on the entry of disbelievers amounted to nothing but a termination of the means of livelihood for believers. So, this restriction was placed to remove any such doubts and apprehensions. The strong message given to them was that Allah Ta'ālā does not depend on material causes as such. When He intends to do something, all related causes start falling in line with His will. So, His will is what matters – the rest follows. Hence, إِنْ شَاءَ (*in sha'*) at the end of the sentence serves as a wise

indicator of this truth.

Verses 29 – 30

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ
مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَلَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا
الْكِتٰبَ حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾
وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ِابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ
اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۚ يُضَاهِـُٔوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ
قَبْلُ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Fight those who neither believe in Allah nor in the Last Day, nor take as prohibited what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor submit to the Faith of Truth – of those who were given the Book – until they pay *jizyah* with their own hands while they are humbled. [29]

And the Jews said, "'Uzair (Ezra) is the Son of Allah" and the Christians said, "Masīh (the Christ) is the Son of Allah." That is their saying (invented) by their mouths. They resemble the earlier disbelievers in their saying. Be they killed by Allah, how far turned away they are! [30]

Commentary

Verse 28 appearing earlier referred to Jihād against the Mushirks of Makkah. The present verses talk about Jihād against the People of the Book. In a sense, this is a prelude to the battle of Tabūk that was fought against the People of the Book. In Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr, it has been reported from the Qur'ān commentator, Mujāhid that these verses have been revealed about the battle of Tabūk. Then, there is the reference to 'those who were given the Book.' In Islāmic religious terminology, they are referred to as '*ahl al-Kitāb*' or People of the Book. In its literal sense, it covers every disbelieving group of people who believe in a Scripture but, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, this term is used for Jews and Christians only – because, only these two groups from the People of the Book were well-known in and around Arabia. Therefore, addressing the Mushriks of Arabia, the Holy Qur'ān

has said:

اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآىِٕفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ .

lest you should say, "The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied." – 6:156

As for the injunction of Jihād against the People of the Book given in verse 29, it is really not particular to the People of the Book. The fact is that this very injunction applies to all disbelieving groups – because, the reasons for the injunction to fight mentioned next are common to all disbelievers. If so, the injunction has to be common too. But, the People of the Book were mentioned here particularly to serve a purpose. Since, it was possible that Muslims may hesitate to fight against them on the ground that they too are believers in a certain degree, believers in Torah and Injīl, and in Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā, عليهم السلام may peace be upon them both. So, it was possible that their connection with past prophets and their Books may become a factor in dissuading them from Jihād. Therefore, fighting with them was mentioned particularly.

There is yet another element of coherence at this place. This particularization of the People of the Book in the verse is also releasing a hint that, in a certain way, these people are deserving of greater punishment. The reasons were simple. They were people with knowledge. They had the knowledge of Torah and Injīl. These Scriptures referred to the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, giving his blessed identity in details. They knew all this, yet elected to reject the truth and went on to mount conspiracies against Islām and Muslims. When they did what they did, their crime became much more serious. That explains why fighting against them was mentioned particularly.

The injunction to fight spells out four reasons in this verse:

1. لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ : They do not believe in Allah.
2. وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ : They do not believe in the Hereafter.
3. لَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ : They do not take as prohibited what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited.

4. لَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ : They do not submit to the Faith of Truth.

This raises a doubt. Is it not that the People of the Book, that is, the Jews and Christians, obviously believe in Allah – and in Hereafter and a Last Day too? Why, then, their faith ('Īmān) in these things has been negated? The reason is that mere words of faith are hardly sufficient to prove one's actual belief in it. Not having the kind of faith desirable in the sight of Allah would amount to having no faith at all. Of course, the Jews and Christians did not openly reject the belief in Tauḥīd, that is, oneness of Allah or pure monotheism. But, as says the next verse, the Jews took Sayyidnā 'Uzayr علیہ السلام and the Christians took Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام to be the sons of God and thereby assigned to them partnership in His divinity. Therefore, their confession of pure monotheism became ineffectual and any claim to faith, false.

Similarly, the kind of faith desirable in the Hereafter was something not to be found with the People of the Book. Many of them went by the belief that, on the Last Day (the Qiyāmah) there will be no return to life in body forms they had in the mortal world. Instead, it will be a kind of spiritual life. As for Paradise and Hell, they did not consider them to be any particular places. Spirit when happy was Paradise and spirit when gloomy was Hell. Since all this is patently contrary to what Allah says, therefore, even their faith in the Last Day too turns out to be no faith in real terms.

The third thing – that these people do not take, what Allah has declared to be unlawful, as unlawful – means that they do not believe in the unlawfulness of many things prohibited by Torah or Injīl – for example, *ribā* (interest). Similarly, there were many edibles prohibited in Torah and Injīl. They just did not consider these unlawful and indulged in them freely.

This tells us about a religious rule of conduct. According to this rule, taking anything declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā as lawful is not simply the commitment of a sin, in fact, it is *kufr*, a flat rejection of the faith itself. Similarly, taking something lawful to be unlawful is also *kufr*. However, should someone inadvertently fall short in practice while still taking the unlawful as unlawful, then, that would be sin, not *kufr*.

Since all wars must end, a limit and end of the action of fighting

against those people has also been set forth in this verse where it has been said: حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ (until they pay *jizyah* with their own hands while they are humbled).

Literally, *jizyah* means return or recompense. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, it refers to the amount of money taken from disbelievers in lieu of killing.

The reason is that *kufr* and *shirk* are rebellion against Allah and *Rasūl*. Killing is the real punishment for it. But, Allah Ta'ālā has, in His perfect mercy, reduced their punishment by giving them an option. The option is that, should they agree to live as subjects of the Islāmic state under the general Islāmic legal framework, they may be allowed to remain there against the payment of a nominal amount of *jizyah*. Since, they would be living there as citizens of a Muslim state, the protection of their life, property and honor will be the responsibility of the Islāmic government and no hindrance will be placed in the observance of their religious duties. The amount thus taken is called *jizyah*.

Should *jizyah* be fixed by mutual conciliation and agreement, there is no prescribed limit imposed by the Sharī'ah. It accepts the amount and thing for which a mutual peace treaty is arrived at – as was done by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with the people of Najrān. A peace pact was concluded between him and the whole group of these people. They agreed to give him two thousand *ḥullahs* annually. A *ḥullah* is a pair of clothes. It could be a waist wrap for the lower part of the body with a top sheet wrap, or a long, loose shirt or cloak. Even the estimated monetary worth of every *ḥullah* was pre-determined. The value of each *ḥullah* was supposed to be one *'Ūqiyah* of silver. An *'Ūqiyah* is equal to approximately 122.472* grams of silver, according to our weights.

A similar agreement was reached between Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ and the Christians of Banī Taghlib which stipulated that the *jizyah* on them be levied at the rate of Islāmic Zakāh – but, twice the Zakāh.

Furthermore, in the event Muslims conquered a certain land through war, then allowed the properties of its residents to remain under their ownership and possession, and they too agreed to continue

1. Awzān-i-Shar'iyyah, Haḍrat Maulanā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī.

living there as law-abiding citizens, a *jizyah* was levied on them. The rate of *jizyah* fixed and implemented by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ during the period of his Khilāfah was four *dirhams* from the rich, two *dirhams* from the middle class and only one *dirham* from the active poor who earned by working on wages, or by making or vending things. This monthly payment of one *dirham* was equal to about 3.618 grams* of silver or its equivalent amount. According to rules, nothing was to be taken from the very poor, disabled or handicapped. Similarly, nothing was to be taken from women, children, aged people and religious leaders living in seclusion.

These were small amounts, yet there were instructions from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that no one should be made to pay more than he could afford. If anyone oppressed a non-Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself will support that non-Muslim against his oppressor on the day of Qiyāmah (Maẓharī)

Reports such as these have led some Muslim jurists to hold the position that there is no particular rate of *jizyah* payment as fixed by the Sharī'ah. Instead, this has been left for the ruler of the time to determine the appropriate action in terms of existing conditions.

The comments appearing above also make it clear that *jizyah* is a compensation for removing the punishment of killing from disbelievers – not a substitute for Islām. Therefore, there is no justification for doubting as to why were they given the permission to keep staying on their policy of aversion from and denial of Islām for a paltry price. The proof is that permission is given to many other people also who live in an Islāmic country with the freedom to keep observing the percepts of their religion. *Jizyah* is not taken from them – for example, women, children, the aged, religious leaders, the disabled and the handicapped. Had *jizyah* been taken in lieu of Islām, it should have been taken from these as well.

It should be noted that the paying of *jizyah* in this verse has been qualified with the words: عَنْ يَّدٍ :'with their own hands.' Here, the first word: عن (*'an*: with) denotes cause, and يد (*yad*: hands) signifies power and subjugation. It means that the payment of this *jizyah* should not

1. Awzān-i-Shar'iyyah, Haḍrat Maulanā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī.

be in the spirit of some voluntary contribution or charity. Instead of that, it has to be in the spirit of recognition and acceptance of Islāmic victory and of the willingness to live under it. (As in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) As for the later part of the sentence: وَهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ (while they are humbled), it means, according to the explanation given by Imām Shāfi'ī رحم الله تعالى, that they should subscribe to the common law of Islām and take the responsibility of remaining obedient to it. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī)

Regarding the instruction given in this verse that once these people have agreed to pay *jizyah*, fighting should be stopped, a little explanation may be useful. According to the majority of Muslim jurists, it includes all disbelievers – whether from the People of the Book or from those other than them. However, the Mushriks of Arabia stand excluded from it for *jizyah* was not accepted from them.

In the second verse (30), the subject taken up briefly in verse 29 (where it was said that these people do not believe in Allah) has been enlarged. In the second verse, it has been said that the Jews take Sayyidnā 'Uzayr عليه السلام to be the Son of God.[1] So do the Christians. They say that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is the Son of God. Therefore, their claim that Allah is One and that they have faith turns out to be false.

After that, it was said: ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ. (That is their saying [invented] by their mouths). This could also mean that these people profess it openly and clearly through their own tongues. There is nothing secret about it. Then, it could also mean that this blasphemy they utter remains the work of their tongues. They can give no reason or justification for it.

Finally, it was said: يُضَاهِـُٔوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ (They resemble the earlier disbelievers in their saying. Be they killed by Allah, how far turned away they are!). It means that the Jews and Christians, by calling prophets sons of Allah, became the same as disbelievers and Mushriks of past ages, for they used to say that the angels, and their idols, Lāt and Manāt, were daughters of God.

1. This is not the belief of all the Jews; it was the belief of some Jews of the Arabia. Now, the Dead Sea Scrolls have also proved the fact that some Jewish sects believed Ezra to be the son of God. It is learnt from some scholars who have studied the Scrolls. والله اعلم (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Verses 31 – 35

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ ۚ وَمَآ اُمِرُوْٓا اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ
سُبْحٰنَهٗ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّطْفِــُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ
بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَاْبَى اللّٰهُ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾
هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى
الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ
كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْاَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ
وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ
وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَّوْمَ
يُحْمٰى عَلَيْهَا فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوْبُهُمْ
وَظُهُوْرُهُمْ ۭ هٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُوْنَ
﴿٣٥﴾

They have taken their rabbis and their monks as gods beside Allah, and also (they have taken) Masīḥ the son of Maryam (as god). And they were not commanded but to worship only One God. There is no god but He. Pure is He from what they associate with Him. [31]

They want to blow out the Light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah rejects everything short of making His light perfect, no matter how the disbelievers may hate it. [32]

He is the One who has sent down His Messenger with guidance and the Faith of Truth, so that He makes it prevail over every faith, no matter how the associators may hate it. [33]

O those who believe, many of the rabbis and the monks do eat up the wealth of the people by false means and prevent (them) from the way of Allah. As for those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the 'good' news of a painful

punishment, [34] **on the day it will be heated up in the fire of Jahannam, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it: "This is what you had accumulated for yourselves. So, taste what you have been accumulating."** [35]

Commentary

The four verses cited above mention how astray the learned and the devoted and the abstaining among the Jews and Christians had gone and what blasphemies of word and deed they had come up with. The word: احبار (*aḥbār*) is the plural form of حبر (*ḥibr*) and رهبان (*ruhbān*) is the plural of راهب (*rāhib*). Ḥibr refers to a religious scholar among the Jews and Christians while a *rāhib* denotes someone who devotes to worship and abstains from a worldly role in life.

In the first verse (31), it has been said that these people have taken their rabbis and monks as gods beside Allah and they have done the same with Sayyidnā 'Īsā ibn Maryam عليه السلام whom they have given the status of their Lord. This is, of course, obvious in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام whom they took to be the son of God and did not demur from saying so. As for the charge against them that they had taken their rabbis and monks as gods, it has its reason. They used to call them as their Lord in clear terms, but even if it is presumed that they did not believe their religious leaders to be their gods, they had virtually transferred to them the right to be obeyed which is the right of Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh*, absolutely and exclusively. They would, so to say, follow the dictates of these leaders under all circumstance – even if their dictates happen to be against Allah and His Messenger. With that attitude, one is bound to land in a valley of no return. How can one go about obeying someone even if that person says things contrary to the dictates of Allah and His Messenger? And how can one who has reached this ultimate limit still not refuse to obey that person? This is like taking someone as god – an act of flagrant blasphemy, an open *kufr*.

This tells us that the present verse is not related in any way to the popular religious issue of following a particular juristic school (*taqlīd*) which has two main aspects. Firstly, common people who are not aware of religious precepts and their details trust 'Ulamā' and follow their *fatāwā*. Secondly, Mujtahid Imāms are followed in juristic issues

requiring Ijtihād. So, this verse has no bearing on that count because such following is, in real terms, nothing but the following of the dictates of Allah and His Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم. Those whom Allah has blessed with knowledge and insight have a direct access to the original resources of Shari'ah whereby they know what Allah and His *Rasūl* have said. They see it and act accordingly. The unaware masses act in accordance with the same injunctions by asking those who have knowledge. Then, there are those who have knowledge but are not competent enough to occupy the station of Ijtihād, they too follow the Mujtahid Imāms in matters requiring *ijtihād*. This following is in accordance with the injunction of the Holy Qur'ān and is nothing but obedience to Allah Ta'ālā – as says the Qur'ān: فَسْئَلُوٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ It means: 'If you yourself are not aware of the injunctions of Allah and the Messenger, act by asking the people of knowledge – 16:43.'[1]

In sum, the masses of people among the Jews and Christians had ignored Scriptures, Divine commandments and the teachings of apostles totally and, in its place, they had taken the word and deed of self-serving scholars and ignorant pseudo-devotees as the core of their religion. This is what has been condemned in the verse.

Then, it was said that these people chose to take the way of error although they were asked by Allah to worship only one God who is free and pure from what they associated with Him. This verse limits itself to saying that they followed the false and obeyed people other than Allah, something they were not permitted to do. In the verse that follows (32), mentioned there is another error they make. It is said that they do not stop at the error they have already made. They, rather, like to compound their errors when they try to subvert Divine guidance and

1. The basic point of difference is that the one who follows an imām does not believe him to be an independent point of obedience. He simply consults him as an interpretor of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. That is why he will not follow him if there is a clear clash between his view and a clear-cut ruling given by the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. The case of Jews and Christians is totally different. They believe their religious leaders (rabbis and popes) as law-givers. They believe them to be infallible who cannot commit mistakes and their rulings are to be obeyed in any case, even though they contradict the ruling given by the scriptures. For more details on the subject, see my book on 'Taqlīd' or on 'Uloom al-Qur'ān.' (Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)

black out the Faith of Truth. The statement has been dressed in a similitude – 'they want to blow out the Light of Allah with their mouths' – although, this is something they cannot do. Allah Taʻālā has already decided that He shall see to it that His Light, that is, the Religion of Islām, reaches its perfection, no matter how displeasing this may turn out to be for those who disbelieve.

After that, the same subject has been further stressed in the third verse (33) by saying that Allah Taʻālā has sent His Messenger with guidance, that is, the Qur'ān, and with the Faith of Truth, that is, Islām, in order to have it prevail over all other faiths. Appearing in almost the same words, there are several other verses of the Holy Qur'ān promising that the religion of Islām shall be made to prevail over all other faiths of the world.

This glad tiding regarding the ascendancy of Islām is, as in Tafsīr Maẓharī, for most times and circumstances. In a Ḥadīth from Sayydinā Miqdād رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: No mud or mortar home shall remain on the face of the earth where the word of Islām has not entered with the honor of the honored and the disgrace of the disgraced. Whoever Allah blesses with honor shall embrace Islām and whoever is to face disgrace shall not, though, accept Islām but shall become a subject of the Islāmic government. This promise of Allah Taʻālā was fulfilled. For about a thousand years, the primacy of Islām remained operative throughout the world.

How this Light of Allah reached its perfection during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the most righteous and worthy elders of the Muslim Community is a spectacle the world has already witnessed. Then, in future too, in terms of its legitimacy and truth for all times to come, the religion of Islām is a perfect religion no sensible person would elect to criticize. For this reason, this Faith of Truth, in terms of its arguments and proofs, has always been powerful. And, should Muslims follow this religion fully and faithfully, outward ascendancy, power and governance also turn out to be its inevitable results. As proved by the annals of the history of Islām, whenever Muslims acted whole-heartedly in accordance with the Qur'ān and Sunnah, no impediment in their way could defeat their determination and their presence was felt all over the world as a dominant force. And whenever and wherever they have reached the limits of being subju-

gated or oppressed, it was but the evil consequence of heedlessness to and contravention of the injunctions of Qur'ān and Sunnah which came before them. As for the Religion of Truth, it stood its grounds as always, august and protected.

In the fourth verse (34), the address is to Muslims but the subject taken up concerns the conduct of rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians, a conduct which led common people astray. Perhaps, the address to Muslims indicates a purpose behind the description of the conduct of Jewish rabbis and Christian monks. The purpose is to warn them as well in order that they too remain alert against such conditions prevailing among Muslims.

The verse states that many rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians eat up the wealth of the people by false means and prevent (them) from the way of Allah.

Most rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians were involved in this practice – and under such conditions, people generally tend to make a sweeping statement and call everyone bad. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān, by adding the word: كثيرا (*kathīra*: many), has prompted Muslims to mind their words even when dealing with enemies. It was clearly demonstrated here by not attributing the practice to all of them. Instead, what was said here was that many of them do so. Then, it was said that they were not doing the right thing when they eat up the wealth of people by false means. 'False means' refers to their practice of giving *fatwā* (religious edict or ruling) counter to the injunction of Torah, for money. In doing so, on occasions, they would misinterpret Divine injunctions through concealment and falsification. Further on from here, yet another error of their conduct was pointed out by saying that they were unfortunate people who, not only that they themselves had gone astray but were also ready to prevent others from seeking the way of Allah in the hope of finding right guidance. The reason is that people, when they see their leaders doing things like that, the inherent love for truth in them dies out. In addition to that, when they start basing their conduct on such false rulings, they end up taking that error and waywardness to be as good as correct.

Since this disease among the rabbis and monks of the Jews and Christians – that they give false rulings for money – showed up because of worldly greed and love for money, the verse takes up the sub-

ject in its own way. It says that excess in love for money and property produces bad results, even punishment if not spent in the way of Allah, and suggests how to get rid of this disease. The exact words of the text are:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ .

As for those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the 'good' news of a painful punishment.

The words: وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا (and do not spend it) indicate that people who spend in the way of Allah as necessary, for them the rest of their accumulated wealth brings no harm.

In Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: Wealth for which Zakāh has been paid is not included under: كنزتم (*kanaztum*: you have accumulated). (Abū Dāwūd, Aḥmad and others)

This tells us that keeping wealth which remains after taking out Zakāh is no sin.

The majority of Muslim jurists and Imāms have taken this approach. It should be noted that the pronoun in وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا (and do not spend it) reverts to فضة (*fiḍḍah*) which means silver. Two things, gold and silver, were mentioned immediately earlier but the pronoun was made to revert to silver only. Tafsīr Maẓharī takes it to be a clear indicator of the rule that should a person have a little of both gold and silver, his threshold (*niṣāb*) will be determined in terms of silver. His Zakāh will be paid by calculating the price of gold in terms of the price of silver.

Explained in the fifth verse (35) is the detail of the 'painful punishment' referred to at the end of verse 34. There, it has been said: يَوْمَ يُحْمٰى عَلَيْهَا فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوْبُهُمْ وَظُهُوْرُهُمْ، هٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُوْنَ (on the day it will be heated up in the fire of Jahannam, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it: "This is what you had accumulated for yourselves. So, taste what you have been accumulating". It means that this 'painful punishment' will be for those who do not pay Zakāh. It will come on a day when the gold and silver accumulated by them will be heated up in the Fire of Jahannam.

Then, their foreheads, sides and backs shall be branded with it, and they shall be told, as a sort of verbal punishment, that it was what they had accumulated for themselves, and in consequence, they better have a taste of what they had accumulated. The return of a deed is the deed itself. That which was accumulated illegally or that which was accumulated legally but without having paid its Zakāh ultimately became, by itself, the punishment of these people.

In this verse, mention has been made of branding foreheads, sides and backs. Either it means the whole body or these three parts have been particularized for the reason that a miser who does not like to spend his wealth in the way of Allah would usually greet a needy visitor looking for charity or Zakāh with a forehead all wrinkled with distaste. After that, when to avoid him, he tries to turn away to the right or the left side. And if the needy person still persists, he would turn his back on him. Perhaps, the forehead, the sides and the back were thus particularized for this punishment.

Verses 36 – 37

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِندَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَٰبِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ
خَلَقَ السَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ
فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا
يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّمَا
النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ
عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِّيُوَاطِئُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكَٰفِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Surely, the number of months according to Allah is twelve (as written) in the Book of Allah on the day He created the heavens and the Earth, of which there are Four Sacred Months. That is the right faith. So, do not wrong yourself therein. And fight the Mushriks* all together as they fight you all together, and be sure that

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

Allah is with the God-fearing. [36]

The postponement of the months is nothing but an increase in the infidelity whereby the disbelievers are misguided. They allow it one year and disallow it another year, so that they may conform (only) to the number of what Allah has sanctified, and allow what Allah has disallowed. Beautified for them is the evil of their deeds. And Allah does not lead the disbelieving people to the right path. [37]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were the errors and misdeeds of disbelievers and Mushriks who persisted with their disbelief and kept associating others in the pristine divinity of Allah. In the present two verses, mentioned there is another bad custom prevailing in Arabia since its age of ignorance – which Muslims have been instructed to abstain from. That bad custom relates to a chain of happenings. Details go back to the distant past since when a year was accepted as having twelve months by the religious codes of all past prophets. Out of these twelve months, four were considered sacred, therefore, worthy of great reverence. They were three consecutive months of Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram, and the month of Rajab.

All religious codes of past prophets agree that every act of worship during these four months is more reward-worthy – and should someone commit a sin during these months, the curse and punishment resulting from it is also more blameworthy. Under these past religious codes, fighting and killing was prohibited during these months.

Since the Arabs of Makkah al-Mukarramah are the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام through Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام, they all professed belief in Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm as a prophet and messenger of Allah and claimed to follow his Sharī'ah. However, as fighting, killing and hunting was also prohibited during these four sacred months among the followers of the Ibrāhīmī community, the people of the Arab age of ignorance found the implementation of this injunction extremely hard. The reason was that, during the pagan period, fighting and killing had become the only vocation for them. Therefore, in order to make this restriction somewhat easy on them, they spun out all sorts of excuses to satisfy their self-serving motives. Whenever they needed

to fight during one of the sacred months, or whenever a sacred month approached while they were already fighting, then, they would say: This year, this month is not sacred. The next month will be the sacred one. For example, when Muḥarram arrived, they would say that 'this year, the month of Muḥarram is not sacred, instead of that, the month of Ṣafar will be sacred'. And if they had some other exigency, they would say, 'this year, the month of Rabī' al-Awwal will be sacred;' or say, 'this year the month of Ṣafar has come earlier and Muḥarram will come later.' Thus, in one stroke, they made the month of Muḥarram the month of Ṣafar! In short, they would somehow complete the count of four month during one year, but would not bother to retain the order and signification of what was divinely determined. It was up to them to give any name to any month, call it Dhu al-Ḥijjah or call it Ramaḍān or make one come earlier and make the other come later. If another emergency came, for example, when they would remain engaged in fighting for a period as long as ten months leaving only two months to the year, then, on this occasion, they would increase the number of months in a year saying, 'this year will be of fourteen months.' In this way, they would make the remaining four months the sacred months.

In short, they did show their reverence for the Ibrāhīmī faith at least by doing it during four months of the year when they would abstain from fighting and killing. But, they did not observe the order of the months in a year according to which four of them were fixed as the sacred months. This was what they juggled with seeking interpretations to suit their needs or fancies.

The outcome was that, during those days, it had become difficult to determine as to which month was Ramaḍān or Shawwāl, or Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah or Rajab. When Makkah al-Mukarramah was conquered in the 8th year of Hijrah and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ to make the proclamation of withdrawal from disbelievers and Mushriks at the Ḥajj season of Hijrah year 9, this month was, according to the genuine calculation, the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah. But, according to the same old custom of the Jāhiliyyah, this month was declared to be that of Dhu al-Qa'dah – and, that year, according to them, not Dhu al-Ḥijjah, but Dhu al-Qa'dah was fixed to be the month of Ḥajj. Then came the Hijrah year 10 which

was the year the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went for his last Ḥajj. As nature would have it, this brought about a unique arrangement when the genuine month was that of Dhu al-Ḥijjah and, according to the arbitrary reckoning of the people of Jāhiliyyah too, that turned out to be Dhu al-Ḥijjah itself. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in his address at Minā: إِنَّ الزَّمَانَ قَدِ اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (Time has come back to its position Allah had set the day He created the heavens and the Earth). It means that the month, the real month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, turned out to be the same month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah that year, even in the sight of the people of Jāhiliyyah.

This was a window to the custom of Jāhiliyyah, a custom that changed the number, the order and the specification of months in a year, even made deletions and alterations at will. The activity of making a few changes here and there may appear to be small and innocuous. A month is a month, call it by any name, it remains a month. But, things were not that simple in the given situation. These changes disturbed the implementation of Islāmic laws connected with a particular month or a specific date in it. They also affected duties fixed for the beginning or the end of the year – such as, the injunctions of Ḥajj during the ten days of the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, fasting during the ten days of Muḥarram and the rules of Zakāh at the end of the year. As a direct result of this practice, hundreds of Islāmic laws were distorted making their compliance useless. In these two verses of the Holy Qur'ān, Muslims have been instructed to remain on guard against the evil in this pagan custom.

Explanation of the Verses

In the first verse (36), it is said: إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُوْرِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا (Surely, the number of months with Allah is twelve). Here, the word: عدة (*'iddah*) appears in the sense of number and شهور (*shuhūr*) is the plural of شهر (*shahr*) which means month. The sense of the verse is that the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is set as twelve. No one has the right to decrease or increase it.

Then, by placing the phrase: فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ (*fī kitābillāh*: as written in the Book of Allah), it was stressed that this numerical setting of the months stood recorded in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) since eternity. Then, by saying: يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (on the day He created the heavens and the Earth), it was indicated that the Divine decree

was, though, promulgated in eternity, but this order and setting of the months came into being when the heavens and the Earth were created.

After that, it was said: مِنۡهَآ اَرۡبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ (of which there are Four Sacred Months). It means that, out of these twelve months, four are sacred. They have been called حرم : *hurum* (sanctified ones) in the sense that fighting and killing is prohibited during these month, and also in the sense that these months are blessed and it is obligatory to hold them in due esteem and that acts of worship during these become more reward worthy. The first injunction out of the two was abrogated in the Sharī'ah of Islām. But, the second one, that of increased reverence, esteem and devotion to 'Ibādah during this period still remains operative in Islām.

In his address[1] of the Day of Sacrifice[2] during the Last Ḥajj[3], the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained these months by saying: 'Three months are consecutive – Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram – and one month is that of Rajab.' But, there were two sayings of the Arabs regarding the month of Rajab. Some tribes used to call the month we know as Ramaḍān the month of Rajab while, as seen by the tribe of Muḍar, Rajab was the month which comes in between Jumadā ath-Thāniah and Sha'bān. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – by mentioning this month as 'Rajab Muḍar' – also made it clear that it means the month of Rajab which is in between Jumadā ath-Thāniah and Sha'bān.

Thereafter appears the statement: ذٰلِكَ الدِّيۡنُ الۡقَيِّمُ (That is the right faith). It means that keeping the setting and serial order of months, specially the injunctions pertaining to the Four Sacred Months, according to the very original decree of Allah Almighty is the right faith to hold. Making any changes, alterations, additions or deletions therein is a sign of crookedness in comprehension and temperament.

The next sentence: فَلَا تَظۡلِمُوۡا فِيۡهِنَّ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ (So, do not wrong yourselves therein) means: 'Do not become unjust to your own selves either by acting against the compliance-worthy injunctions pertaining to these

1. Khuṭbah.

2. Yowmu 'n-Naḥr, a term used for 'Īdu 'l-Aḍḥā, the Feast or Festival of Sacrifice.

3. Ḥujjatu 'l-Wadā'.

months, or by not observing proper respect for them, or by falling short in devoting yourselves to 'Ibādah therein.

In his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: The hint given here is that these blessed months have an exclusive characteristic of their own. Whoever devotes to 'Ibādah during these is awarded with the ability and encouragement to engage in it during the rest of the months. Similarly, a person who makes the necessary effort to stay safe from sins and other bad deeds during these months finds that remaining safe from these evils during the rest of the months of a year has become easier on him. Therefore, not making the best out of these months is a terrible loss.

Up to this point, the text has described and refuted a particular custom of Jāhiliyyah practiced by the Mushriks of Makkah. At the end of the verse, the text reverts to the command, given at the beginning of the verse (5), requiring that, soon after the expiry of the treaty deadline, Jihād is obligatory against all Mushriks and disbelievers.

The second verse (37) also refers to this very custom of Jāhiliyyah by saying: إِنَّمَا النَّسِيٓءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِى الْكُفْرِ (... is nothing but an increase in the infidelity). The word: نَسِيٓءُ (*nasī'*) is a verbal noun that means to move back or postpone. It is also used in the sense of that which is delayed (*mu'akhkhar*).

By putting these month back and forth, the Mushriks of Arabia thought, they would be achieving two things – that it will serve their material interests and that it would also give them the credit of complying with the Divine injunction. This approach was not approved by Allah Ta'ālā for their act of postponing and moving months from where they belonged was nothing but an addition to their stance of denial which was going to lead them further astray. That they go about declaring that a sacred month was not sacred in some year and then be ready to name it as sacred in some other year was simply unacceptable. The sentence: لِيُوَاطِـُٔوْا عِدَّةَ مَاحَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ (so that they may conform [only] to the number of what Allah has sanctified) following soon after means that a mere act of conforming to the given number cannot stand for the correct compliance of the injunction. The truth of the matter is that the month for which the injunction has been given should be the month in which the injunction must be carried out. This is imperative.

Injunctions and Rulings

The verses cited above prove that the order of months and the names by which they are known in Islām should not be taken as terms coined by human beings. In fact, the day the Lord of all the worlds created the heavens and the Earth, He had also settled this order and these names and, along with it, particular injunctions to be carried out during particular months. From here, we also come to know that, in all Islāmic legal injunctions, only lunar months are credible in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. In other words, all injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām – such as, fasting, Ḥajj, Zakāh and many others – relate to the lunar calendar. But, when it comes to finding out the day, date and year, the way the Holy Qur'ān has declared the Moon as its indicator, it has, very similarly, identified the Sun too as the other sign: لِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ (so that you may know the number of years and the count [of time] – 10:5). Therefore, keeping track of days and years through a lunar or solar calendar is equally permissible. But, Allah Ta'ālā has favored the lunar calendar for His injunctions and has made it the pivot round which the laws of the Sharī'ah of Islām revolve. Therefore, the preservation of the lunar calendar is Farḍ al-Kifāyah (a religious obligation which, if fulfilled by some, will absolve others). If the entire community of Muslims were to abandon the lunar calendar and forget all about it, then, everyone will be a sinner. However, if it remains viably preserved, the use of another calendar is also permissible – but, there is no doubt that it is against the way of Allah and the way of the worthy forbears of Islām – therefore, it is not good to opt for it unnecessarily.

The month intercalated to complete the count of years has also been considered by some as impermissible under this verse. But, that is not correct because the system of reckoning under which the intercalation of a month is made has nothing to do with the laws of the Sharī'ah of Islām. The people of Jāhiliyyah changed these religious laws by adding to the lunar and legal months, therefore, they were censured. As for the practice of intercalation, it does not affect Islāmic legal injunctions, therefore, it is not included under this prohibition.

Verses 38 – 42

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ

اثَّاقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرَضِيتُمْ بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ
فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ إِلَّا تَنْفِرُوا
يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ
شَيْئًا وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ
نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي
الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ
سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ
﴿٤٠﴾ انْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ
عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَٰكِنْ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الشُّقَّةُ وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ
يُهْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

O those who believe, what is wrong with you that when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter. [38]

If you do not come out (in the way of Allah), He will punish you with a painful punishment and will bring in your place a nation other than you, and you can do Him no harm at all. And Allah is powerful over everything. [39]

If you do not help him, then, Allah has already helped him when the disbelievers expelled him, the second of the two, when they were in the cave, and he was saying to his companion, "Do not grieve. Allah is surely with us." So, Allah sent down His tranquility on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see, and rendered the word of the disbelievers low. And the word of

Allah is the highest. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [40]

Come out (in the way of Allah), light or heavy, and carry out *jihād* with your wealth and lives, in the way of Allah. That is good for you, if you were to realize. [41]

If there had been some gain near at hand and an average journey, they would have certainly followed you, but the difficult destination was too far for them. And they will swear by Allah: "If we could, we would have set out with you." They are ruining themselves. And Allah knows that they are liars. [42]

Commentary

The verses quoted above describe an important battle from among those fought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. As a corollary, also given there are many injunctions and instructions. This battle is known as the battle of Tabūk and is almost the last battle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Tabūk is the name of a place located close to the Syrian border towards the north of Madīnah. Syria was, at that time, a province of the government controlled by Byzantine Christians. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached Madīnah in the 8th year of Hijrah after the conquest of Makkah and the battle of Ḥunain, that was a time major parts of the Arabian Peninsula had come under the control of the Islāmic state. This was a period of some peace Muslims could enjoy after their eight year long battles against the Mushriks of Makkah.

But, destiny has its own workings. Is it not that Allah had already revealed about the blessed person of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهِ. (so that He makes it prevail over every faith – 9:33, 48:28, 61:9) which was the glad tidings of a world of victories and the ascendancy of the Faith of Truth? The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions in the mission would hardly have the respite to relax. Soon after they reached Madīnah, Syrian traders of olive oil informed them that the Byzantine ruler, Hiraql had assembled his forces at Tabūk on the border of Syria. They were also told that soldiers of the Byzantine army had been placated by the payment of advance salaries for one year and that they had sinister understanding with some Arab tribes and that they all had plans to mount a surprise attack on Madīnah.

When this information reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he

decided that their attack plans should be pre-empted and they should be challenged where they are gathered together with their forces. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, with reference to Muḥammad ibn Yusūf Ṣāliḥī)

By chance, this was a terribly hot summer. People in Madīnah were generally devoted to agriculture. Their farms were close to being harvested. On this depended their economy, rather the sustenance of the whole year. Like people in vocations who have empty pockets by the end of the month, people who depend on agricultural produce are empty-handed close to the harvesting time. On the one hand, they have poverty while on the other, they have hopes of income in the near future. Then, there was this scorching heat of the summer for a people who had their first breather after eight years of incessant wars. No doubt, this was an exacting trial.

But, equally crucial was the time. This Jihād was different. It was not like the wars they had fought before. At that time, they were fighting common people like them. Here, they were to confront the trained armed forces of Hiraql, the ruler of Byzantine. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered all Muslims of Madīnah to come out for this Jihād. He also invited some other tribes living around Madīnah to join in.

This general call was a tough test for those who were willing to make sacrifices for Islām as well as a challenge to the hypocrites who would have to prove their claim to be Muslims by joining the Jihād or be exposed as false pretenders. Apart from this consideration, the inevitable consequence was that those who professed belief in Islām reacted to the call in terms of the conditions they were in. The Holy Qur'ān has enumerated them as separate groups of people and has pointed out to their condition as well.

The first group included those who were strong and perfect in their faith. They were ready for Jihād without any hesitation. The second group was composed of those who hesitated at the initial stage but, later on, joined up with those ready for Jihād. About these two groups of people, the Holy Qur'ān said: الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (... who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked – 9:117). The third group was of those who were unable to join this Jihād on the basis of some genuine excuse. About that, by saying: لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاۗءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى (There is no

blame on the weak, nor on the sick – 9:91), the Holy Qur'ān has announced the acceptance of their excuse. Belonging to the fourth group were people who, despite that they had no excuse to offer, simply did not participate in the Jihād out of sheer laziness. Several verses were revealed about them, for example: اٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ (And there are others who admitted their sins – 9:102), and: اٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ (And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah [comes] – 9:106), and: وَعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred – 9:118). These three verses were revealed about similar people. They carry admonition for their inertia as well as the good news that their Taubah or repentance has been accepted.

The fifth group was that of the hypocrites, the *munāfiqs*. Their hypocrisy was deep seated and saying yes to Jihād was hard. Finally, they failed to cover it up and stayed away from Jihād. Hypocrites have been mentioned in the verses of the Qur'ān on many places.

The sixth group included *munāfiqs* who had joined up with Muslims with the objective of spying and mischief making. The Holy Qur'ān mentions their conduct in the following verses:

{1} وَفِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ (And among you there are their listeners – 9:47);

{2} وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ (And if you ask them, they will say – 9:65);

{3} وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا (And had planned for what they could not achieve – 9:74).

Given above were details about those who stayed away from the Jihād. But, the fact is that their total number was negligible. The majority did belong to those Muslims who, despite many prohibitive factors, chose to sacrifice all gains and comforts and were ready to face expected hardships in the way of Allah. This is the reason why the total number of the Islāmic army which set out for this Jihād was thirty thousand – a number never seen in a Jihād before.

The outcome of this Jihād expedition was that Hiraql, the Byzantine ruler – when he heard about such a large Muslim force coming up against him – was overtaken by awe. He simply did not turn up on the battlefield. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم camped on the war front with the army of his angelic companions for a few days in the hope that the enemy may decide to come. When totally disappointed, he returned back to Madīnah.

The verses quoted above obviously relate to the fourth group of people who did not take part in the Jihād because of their inertia and without any valid excuse. In the beginning of this set of verses, they were admonished for their lethargy, then, they were told why they behaved the way they did and, finally, they were told how to correct themselves. This wise approach unfolds major lessons.

Regard for *Dunyā* and Disregard for *Ākhirah*:

The Root of all Crimes

No doubt, what has been said above is related to a particular event. But, if we were to think about it, we shall realize that the real cause of negligence towards faith - and of every crime and sin - is nothing but this love for the material and heedlessness towards the life to come. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيْئَةٍ (The love for Dunyā [material life of the present world] is at the top of every error and sin). That is why it was said in the verse:

> O those who believe, what is wrong with you that, when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? - 38.

This was the diagnosis of the disease. Its treatment appears next when it was said:

> So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter - 38.

The thrust of the argument is that one's major concern in life should be that of the eternal life in Ākhirah. It is this concern for the Ākhirah that offers the only and the most perfect treatment of all diseases. Incidentally, this also happens to be the master prescription for eradication of crimes that bother human societies all over the world.

The 'Aqā'id of Islām (articles of faith) are based on three principles: (1) Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah); (2) Risālah (the true mission of the messenger and prophet sent by Allah) and (3) Ākhirah (Hereafter). Out of these, the belief in Ākhirah is, in all reality, the moving spirit for correction of deeds and serves as an iron wall before crimes and sins. A little thought would make it amply clear that there can be no peace in the world without subscribing to this belief. The world as we see it today has reached its zenith in terms of its material progress. Then,

there is no dearth of functional solutions and plans designed to eradicate crimes. Laws proliferate. So does the administrative machinery to interpret and implement the objective. No doubt, there is progress in those terms. But, along with it, everyone is witnessing crimes increasing day by day, everywhere, in all societies. The reason, in our humble view, is no other but that the disease has not been properly diagnosed and the line of treatment is not sound. The root of the disease is materialism, excessive indulgence in the temporal and negligence or avoidance of the thought of any life to come. The only way this frame of mind can be corrected is to remember Allah and think about the Akhirah, the life to come. Whenever and wherever in this world this master prescription was used, whole nations and their societies became models of humanity at its best earning the admiration of angels. That this happened during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and during the age of his noble Companions, is sufficient as its proof.

It is interesting that the modern world would very much like to eradicate crimes but it would do so by not having to bother about God and the Hereafter. To achieve this purpose, it invents, introduces and surrounds itself with things to live with – a lifestyle which would never allow human beings to turn their attention towards God and Hereafter. The result of this negative approach is no mystery. We are watching it with our own eyes. Even in the face of ever better laws, all legal systems seem to be failing. Crimes are there as they were, in fact, they are increasing with dangerous speed. To conclude, we wish that intelligent people among countries and nations of the world would think of using this Qur'ānic prescription, at least for once, and discover for themselves how easily crimes can be controlled.

Now, as we move to the second verse (39), the text has, after serving a notice of warning to the lazy and the listless about their disease and its treatment, delivered its verdict by saying:

> 'If you do not come out for Jihād, Allah will have you go through a painful punishment and bring in your place a nation other than you, and (by your refusal to follow Islām) you can bring no loss to Allah (or His Messenger) because Allah is powerful over everything.'

In the third verse (40), by citing the event of the Hijrah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it has been stressed that the Rasūl of Allah has no need to

depend on any human help and support. Allah can help him directly through unseen factors – as it happened at the time of Hijrah when his own people had forced him to leave his homeland. On this journey, the only companion he had was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, the true one. Enemy foot soldiers and riders were looking for them in hot pursuit. The place to hide he had found was no fortified fortress. It was just a cave and the enemy search party had reached close to its edges. Inside it, the companion of the cave, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was worried, not for his own safety, but about his master. He was in fear lest the enemy outside were to harm the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, the master himself was sitting calm like a mountain at peace. Not simply that he was himself cool and collected, he was telling his companion, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr: لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا (*'lā taḥzan innallāha ma'anā'*: Do not grieve. Allah is with us).

What has been said here is composed of a couple of words, easy and effortless as they sound. But, let those listening place the blueprint of conditions prevailing before their eyes, cross their hearts and ask: Can someone dependent on mere material means be that tranquil? Every honest person would say that it was just not possible. The reason for this was no other but that which the Qur'ān has given in the next sentence:

> So, Allah sent down His tranquility on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see ...

These troops could be troops of angels, and of the elemental forces of the entire universe too – for they are, so to say, a virtual army of Allah. When this happened, the ultimate came to be. The word of disbelievers was rendered low and the word of Allah remained the highest.

In the fourth verse (41), the command given earlier has been repeated for emphasis. It is being said here that, once the Prophet of Allah orders people to come out for Jihād, they must come out as a matter of absolute obligation – for on the compliance of this command hinges all that is good for them.

The fifth verse (42) mentions an excuse offered by those who did not participate in the Jihād because of negligence and lethargy. It was rejected as unacceptable because they did not use the ability given by Allah to pick and choose the right thing to do in His way. Therefore, the excuse of not having that ability is not valid.

Verses 43 – 52

عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنۡكَ ۚ لِمَ اَذِنۡتَ لَهُمۡ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِيۡنَ صَدَقُوۡا
وَتَعۡلَمَ الۡكٰذِبِيۡنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَا يَسۡتَاۡذِنُكَ الَّذِيۡنَ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ
وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ اَنۡ يُّجَاهِدُوۡا بِاَمۡوَالِهِمۡ وَاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌ
بِالۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ اِنَّمَا يَسۡتَاۡذِنُكَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ
الۡاٰخِرِ وَارۡتَابَتۡ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ فَهُمۡ فِىۡ رَيۡبِهِمۡ يَتَرَدَّدُوۡنَ ﴿٤٥﴾
وَلَوۡ اَرَادُوا الۡخُرُوۡجَ لَاَعَدُّوۡا لَهٗ عُدَّةً وَّلٰكِنۡ كَرِهَ اللّٰهُ انۡۢبِعَاثَهُمۡ
فَثَبَّطَهُمۡ وَقِيۡلَ اقۡعُدُوۡا مَعَ الۡقٰعِدِيۡنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَوۡ خَرَجُوۡا فِيۡكُمۡ
مَّا زَادُوۡكُمۡ اِلَّا خَبَالًا وَّلَا۟اَوۡضَعُوۡا خِلٰلَكُمۡ يَبۡغُوۡنَكُمُ الۡفِتۡنَةَ ۚ
وَفِيۡكُمۡ سَمّٰعُوۡنَ لَهُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ لَقَدِ ابۡتَغَوُا
الۡفِتۡنَةَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَقَلَّبُوۡا لَكَ الۡاُمُوۡرَ حَتّٰى جَآءَ الۡحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ اَمۡرُ
اللّٰهِ وَهُمۡ كٰرِهُوۡنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّقُوۡلُ ائۡذَنۡ لِّىۡ وَلَا تَفۡتِنِّىۡ ؕ
اَلَا فِى الۡفِتۡنَةِ سَقَطُوۡا ؕ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيۡطَةٌۢ بِالۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اِنۡ
تُصِبۡكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤۡهُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ تُصِبۡكَ مُصِيۡبَةٌ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا قَدۡ اَخَذۡنَاۤ
اَمۡرَنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوۡا وَّهُمۡ فَرِحُوۡنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قُلۡ لَّنۡ يُّصِيۡبَنَاۤ
اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا ۚ هُوَ مَوۡلٰٮنَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلۡيَتَوَكَّلِ
الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلۡ هَلۡ تَرَبَّصُوۡنَ بِنَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِحۡدَى الۡحُسۡنَيَيۡنِ ؕ
وَنَحۡنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمۡ اَنۡ يُّصِيۡبَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنۡ عِنۡدِهٖۤ اَوۡ
بِاَيۡدِيۡنَا ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوۡۤا اِنَّا مَعَكُمۡ مُّتَرَبِّصُوۡنَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Allah has forgiven you; why did you permit them before the truthful ones could become distinct to you, and you could be sure of the liars. [43]

Those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day do not ask you to be excused from *jihād* with their wealth and lives. And Allah is aware of the God-fearing. [44]

Only those people ask you to be excused who do not believe in Allah and in the Last Day and whose hearts are in doubt, so they are wavering in their doubt. [45]

And had they wished to set out, they would have made some preparation for it, but Allah disliked their going forth, so He detained them, and it was said to them, "Stay back with those who are staying back." [46]

And had they set out with you, they would have added nothing for you but trouble, and would have run around in your midst seeking disorder for you. And among you there are their listeners. And Allah is aware of the wrongdoers. [47]

They sought disorder even earlier and tried to upset matters for you, until the Truth arrived and the will of Allah prevailed, though they disliked it. [48]

And among them there is one who says, "Allow me (to stay behind) and do not expose me to an ordeal." Look! They have already fallen into an ordeal, and certainly the Jahannam has the disbelievers encircled. [49]

If some good comes to you, it annoys them, and if some suffering visits you, they say, "We had already taken care of our problem" and they go their way delighted. [50]

Say, "Nothing can ever reach us except what Allah has written for us. He is our Master. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust." [51]

Say, "Is it not that you are expecting for us but one of the two good things (martyrdom and victory)? And we are expecting for you that Allah sends to you a punishment from Himself or at our hands. So, wait. Of course, we are waiting with you. [52]

Commentary

Mentioned in most of the seventeen verses of this entire section are hypocrites who had, on false pretexts, secured permission from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that they would not go to participate in the Jihād of Tabūk. Falling under it, there are many injunctions, rulings and instructions that have been pointed out in the commentary.

The first verse (43) begins in a subtle manner. Here, a complaint has been made to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He has been told that those hypocrites were lying when they presented themselves as deserving of being excused from active service in Jihād. But, he accepted their plea without first having made an inquiry about the real state of

affairs with them which would have made the true and false of it come out clearly. This gave them the opportunity to go about congratulating themselves on how smartly they had deceived the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Though, in verses coming next, Allah Taʿālā has also clarified that those people were asking to be excused from Jihād just to play tricks – otherwise, even if they were not permitted, still then, they would have never gone. And in another verse, it was also pointed out that, in case these people did go to this Jihād, it would have been of no use to Muslims – in fact, their conspiracy and mischief would have been far more dangerous.

But, the drift of the argument is that, in case, permission was not given, they were still not going to go anyway – however, their hypocrisy would have definitely been exposed and they would not have had the opportunity to throw taunts at Muslims and exult that they had fooled them. And the real purpose here is not to show wrath or displeasure, instead of that, it is a way of saying that, in future, the motives and moves of such people should be watched and screened carefully. Then, it can be conceded that there does exist a certain kind of displeasure in the external framework of words but it has been coated with a delightful concern for sensitivities, particularly that of his dear prophet. We can see that the expression of displeasure which begins with the words: لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ (why did you permit them?) does not actually begin until said ahead of it was: عفا الله عنك (Allah has forgiven you)!

It has been said by people having insight in the nature of God-Prophet relationship that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had a special attachment to Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh*. His heart could not simply bear the shock of being in a situation where he is subjected to questioning from Allah Taʿālā. For instance, if the words: لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ (why did you permit them?) – which translate as interrogation in their formal appearance – were said in the very beginning, the blessed heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been simply unable to take it. Therefore, the words: عَفَا اللهُ عَنْكَ (Allah has forgiven you) have been placed earlier. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it gives him the information that something has happened, something that was not liked by Allah. Secondly, the information that he has been forgiven for whatever had happened was being given beforehand so that what is said next should not break his blessed heart.

As for the word of forgiveness, let there be no doubt about it and let no one say that forgiveness is usually given for crimes and sins – and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was *ma'ṣūm* (protected from sin) – what, then, would be the sense of forgiveness at this place? The answer is that the way there is forgiveness for sin, similarly, there could also be forgiveness for what is contrary to the preferred way (*khilāf al-awlā*) or is simply undesirable – and that does not violate the concept of the *'iṣmah* (infallibility) of a prophet.

In the second (44) and third (45) verses given there was the difference between believers and hypocrites. Those who believe in Allah Ta'ālā truly and staunchly do not pick an occasion like that only to seek desertion from Jihād just for the sake of love for their lives and wealth and go about asking the permission of their prophet to stay back. In fact, this is the behavior of only those who do not believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement (*Ākhirah*), truly and correctly – and, as for Allah, He knows the God-fearing perfectly well.

At least, one aspect of why their excuse was false has been given in the fourth (46) where it has been said: وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً (And had they [really] wished to set out [for Jihād], they would have [of necessity] made [at least] some preparation for it [but they made none] – 46). This shows that the plea of having an excuse was false. The truth of the matter was that they just did not have any intention to come out for Jihād.

How do we know if an excuse is reasonable or unreasonable?

An important principle comes out from this verse, a principle that can be used to distinguish between a reasonable and an unreasonable excuse. To wit, an excuse presented only by those who are ready to carry out orders – but, were rendered helpless by some accident – can be entertained and accepted. This rule applies to all matters pertaining to the excusable. As for a person who made no preparation to carry out orders, did not even make the intention to carry them out when called, thereafter, came some excuse – then, this excuse will be like the excuse of sin which is worse than the sin. This will not be taken as a genuine excuse. Take the example of a person who has made all preparations to present himself in the *masjid* for his Jumu'ah prayers and is intending to go there when, all of a sudden, came an impediment which prevented him from going there. Then, his excuse is rea-

sonable – and Allah Ta'ālā blesses such a person with the full reward of his 'Ibādah (worship). As for the person who just did not make any preparation but, later on, by chance, there came an excuse before him, then, this will be taken as nothing but a ruse and pretext.

Take an example from everyday life. One makes the necessary preparations to get up early in the morning and get ready for the Fajr Ṣalāh. An alarm was set in the family clock, or somebody was assigned to give a wake-up call. After that, by chance, whatever arrangements were made did not work – and because of this, the Ṣalāh was missed. This is similar to what happened to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he camped on a journey late at night (*lailatu 't-ta'rīs*). In order to get up on time for Fajr Ṣalāh, he arranged with Sayyidnā Bilāl رضى الله عنه that he would sit the night out and wake up everybody when morning comes. But, by chance, sleep overtook him too. Everyone got up only when the sun had risen. So, this excuse is correct and reasonable. Based on this, consoling his Companions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَاتَفْرِيْطَ فِى النَّوْمِ اِنَّمَا التَّفْرِيْطُ فِى الْيَقْظَةِ (There is no negligence in sleep. Negligence occurs only when awake) that is, one is excusable in sleep. The reason was that, as far as it was possible to do, arrangements had already been made to get up on time.

In short, a decision about an excuse being reasonable or unreasonable can be taken only by knowing whether or not preparation was made to carry out orders. Simply using a lot of words to make a point gets nothing done.

In the fifth (47) verse, it was explained that the hypocrites had procured the permission to stay away from Jihād by deceit and now it was better that they just did not participate in it. Had they gone there, they would have done nothing but hatch conspiracies, circulate rumors and spread disorder. The Qur'ānic statement: وَفِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ (And among you there are their listeners) means that, among Muslims, there were some simple people too, people who could be easily taken advantage of and who may have likely been affected by their false rumors.

The opening sentence of the sixth verse (48): لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (They sought disorder even earlier...) refers to what had happened in the battle of 'Uḥud.

The statement: وَظَهَرَ اَمْرُاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ (... and the will of Allah prevailed,

though they disliked it) at the end of the verse indicates that victory is in the hands of Allah. This has been proved on earlier occasions when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was blessed with victory. The same will happen in this Jihād as well when all tricks played by hypocrites will fail.

In the seventh verse (49), after citing a particular excuse made by a noted hypocrite called Jadd ibn Qays, a comment has been made which shows how astray he had gone. The excuse for not going on Jihād he came up with was that he happened to be a young man. If he went out against the Roman Christians in their territory, there were chances that he might fall into the snare of their beautiful women! ('Do not expose me to an ordeal') The Qur'ān responded by saying: أَلَا فِى الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا (Look! they have already fallen into an ordeal). It means that such people were not very smart. They were trying to hide behind the excuse of an imaginary ordeal, not realizing that they had already fallen into the sin of a certain ordeal, the ordeal of acting against the command of Allah and His Messenger, and of deserting the Jihād effort, right on the spot.

The last sentence of the verse: وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكٰفِرِينَ (and certainly the Jahannam has the disbelievers encircled) could have two meanings. It could either mean that the Hell would encircle them in the Hereafter. Or, it could mean that the very chain of causes, which are operating to take them to Hell, and which have them all encircled at that time, are what has been equated with Hell. Given this interpretation, it would suggest that they happen to be, even now, within the larger circle of nothing but Hell.

In the eighth verse (50), yet another aspect of their low nature has been mentioned by saying that, though these people live among Muslims giving the outward impression that they are one of them, but they are soon exposed by their inner reactions to what happens to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The text illustrates it by saying: إِنْ تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ (If some good comes to you, it annoys them) and: وَإِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَّقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوا وَّهُمْ فَرِحُونَ (and if some suffering visits you, they say, "We had already taken care of our problem"). They would take it as expedient in their favor that they did not go along with Muslims and found the results satisfying enough to go away delighted.

In the ninth verse (51), Allah Ta'ālā has instructed the Holy Prophet

صلى الله عليه وسلم, and Muslims, that they should not allow themselves to be affected by things like that said by the hypocrites and that they must always keep reality as it is before them. The words of the Holy Qur'an are: قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَآ إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَىٰنَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (Say, "Nothing can ever reach us except what Allah has written for us. He is our Master. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust"). In other words, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked that he should tell those, who worship material causes such as these, that they were in a serious deception. These material causes were no more than a curtain. The power that moves inside them belongs to none but Allah. Whatever happens to us is exactly whatever Allah has written for us – and He is our Master, Guardian and Helper. And Muslims must place their real trust in Him alone. Consequently, they must see material causes as no more than effective agents and signs while never taking them to be the real dispensers of any good or evil.

Belief in Destiny includes Management of affairs: Giving Inaction or Mismanagement the name of Trust is Wrong

This verse (51) brings into sharp focus the essential reality of the religious issue of Taqdīr (destiny) and Tawakkul (trust). The outcome of believing in Taqdīr and Tawakkul should never be that one goes home, sits tight, does nothing and says what will be will be. This is no belief in destiny and this is no practice of trust. Instead, the thing to do is that one should devote full personal energy and courage to put together whatever lawful material means one can arrange for – within the range of what lies in control. After this has been done, the matter should be resigned to destiny and trust. However, the caveat is that one has to keep his or her sight trained toward Allah alone – for it is He who has the ultimate outcome of everything one does under His absolute power and control.

Speaking generally, people around the world are found in great confusion about the religious problem of Taqdīr and Tawakkul. Some of them are plain irreligious. They just do not recognize the very possibility that something like that exists. They are content with material means as the deity they are comfortable with. Then, there are other people who lack proper awareness. They have turned destiny and trust into a pretext for their sloth and inertia. The Prophet of Islām, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, made full preparation for

Jihād, after which, the revelation of this verse put an end to this cycle of excess and deficiency and showed the right way – as put in the lively Persian saying: بر توکل زانوے اشتربہ بند (With Tawakkul [trust], do tie the knees of the camel). To sum up, means which you have the option to utilize, are nothing but blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā. Not taking advantage of these means is ingratitude, even stupidity. Of course, do not give means the status they do not have and believe that results and outcomes are not subservient to these means – instead of all that, they obey the command of Allah Almighty.

The tenth verse (52), while mentioning the charming demeanor of the man of true faith, has given an answer to hypocrites delighted over the discomfort of Muslims. According to the man of true faith, the thing that hypocrites take as suffering for Muslims and which makes them happy is really no suffering for them. In fact, it is another form of comfort and success. The reason is that a man of true faith becomes deserving of eternal returns and rewards even after having failed in his strong resolve, something that is the real objective of all his successes. Therefore, he succeeds, even in failure and gains, even in loss.

The first sentence of the verse: هَلْ تَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِنَآ اِلَّآ اِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ (Say, "Is it not that you are expecting for us but one of the two good things [martyrdom and victory]"?) means exactly this. However, along with it, it was also said that the fate of the disbelievers was quite contrary for they will find no respite from suffering or punishment under any condition. Either, they would be punished at the hands of Muslims right here in this world, in which case, they will taste the punishment in the mortal and the eternal world both. And, in case, they somehow escaped unscathed in the mortal world, there is no possibility of deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter.

Verses 53 – 59

قُلْ اَنْفِقُوْا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا لَّنْ يُّتَقَبَّلَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا
فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ اَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقٰتُهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنَّهُمْ
كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ اِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالٰى وَلَا
يُنْفِقُوْنَ اِلَّا وَهُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿۵۴﴾ فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ

أَوْلَادُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُم بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَتَزْهَقَ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ
لَمِنكُمْ وَمَا هُم مِّنكُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرَقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَوْ يَجِدُونَ
مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغَارَاتٍ أَوْ مُدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾
وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِن
لَّمْ يُعْطَوْا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا
آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِن
فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

Say, "Spend, willingly or unwillingly, it will never be accepted from you. You have been a sinning people." [53]

And nothing has prevented their spending(s) from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger, and they do not come to the Ṣalāh but lazily, and do not spend but unwillingly. [54]

So, their wealth and their children should not attract you. In fact, Allah wants to punish them with these in this lowly life and that their souls should depart while they are disbelievers. [55]

And they swear by Allah that they are from among you, whereas they are not from among you, but they are a people in fear. [56]

If they find a place of refuge or caves or any place to enter, they will turn towards it running unbridled. [57]

And among them there are those who find fault with you in the matter of Ṣadaqāt (alms). So, if they are given some of it, they are quite happy, and if they are given nothing from it, suddenly they become unhappy. [58]

Only if they were happy with what Allah and His Messenger had given to them, and had said, "Allah is all-sufficient for us. Allah shall give us (more) of His grace, and His Messenger as well. Indeed, we crave for Allah alone." [59]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were bad morals and bad deeds of the hypocrites. The same subject continues in the verses quoted above. As for the statement in verse 55 -- where it has been declared that the wealth and children of hypocrites should not be taken as a blessing for them as these are, in fact, a form of punishment from Allah -- it has a reason. Is it not that love for and engrossment in worldly life becomes a punishment right here in this world? One starts with desires to acquire worldly wealth, then goes through a series of hard work to establish the necessary channels, day in and day out, sacrificing sleep, comfort and family life. After that, if one succeeds, come the concerns of increasing and retaining it – a round the clock punishment indeed. A serious loss or sickness could become unwelcome cans of worries, and if one happens to get everything one wants, the vicious circle continues either through apprehensions of decreasing wealth or cravings of increasing it further. There is just no respite anytime.

Finally, these things go out of one's hands. This may happen at the time of death, or much earlier. Whenever it does, despair takes over. What is this, if not punishment? Man surrounds himself with articles of comfort and calls it comfort. Real comfort, the peace and comfort of the heart is something man has yet to find. But, in the meantime, man has to rely on material means and things for satisfaction, not realizing that these agents will keep snatching away his share of peace in this world and will also become the prelude to the punishment in the world to come.

Can Ṣadaqah be given to a disbeliever?

The last two verses show that the hypocrites used to receive a share from properties available as Ṣadaqāt (plural of Ṣadaqah, meaning a donation through which one seeks reward with Allah Ta'ālā, usually referred to as alms or charity). But, when they did not get these as they wished, they became angry and started accusing and cursing. If, at this place, Ṣadaqāt are taken in their general sense – which includes all Ṣadaqāt, necessary (*wājib*) and voluntary (*nafl*) – then, there is no problem, because non-Muslims can be given out of the voluntary Ṣadaqāt. This is permissible on the basis of the consensus of Muslim Ummah and stands proved from Sunnah. However, even if Ṣadaqāt at this place mean what is obligatory, like Zakāh and 'Ushr, then, we

should remember that the hypocrites were given a share from it on the basis that they claimed to be Muslims. Since they claimed to believe in all the necessary articles of faith and their *kufr* was hidden in their hearts, with no conclusive proof in their apparent claims they were treated as Muslims to the extent of this worldly life and Allah Ta'ālā had, in His wisdom, given the orders that the hypocrites should be treated as Muslims. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Signs of Hypocrites and Warning for Muslims

In verse 54, two signs of hypocrites have been given: (1) they come to the Ṣalāh lazily and listlessly, and (2) that they spend in the way of Allah unwillingly.

Muslims have been warned here that sloth in Ṣalāh and being sour at heart while spending in the way of Allah, that is, Zakāh and Ṣadaqah, are signs of *nifāq* (hypocrisy). All Muslims should make conscious effort to stay safe from these signs.

Verse 60

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْعٰمِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَ الْمُؤَلَّفَةِ
قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَفِى الرِّقَابِ وَالْغٰرِمِيْنَ وَفِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَابْنِ
السَّبِيْلِ ؕ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

The Ṣadaqāt (prescribed alms) are only for the poor, the needy, those employed to collect these, those whose hearts are to be won, in (freeing) slaves, in (releasing) those in debt, in the way of Allah and for a wayfarer - this being prescribed by Allah. And Allah is Knowing, Wise. [60]

Commentary

Recipients of Ṣadaqāt

Objection raised by some hypocrites against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the answer to that, was given in verses previous to this. It will be recalled that the hypocrites had blamed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he (God forbid) does not observe justice while disbursing Ṣadaqāt and gives whatever he wishes to whomsoever he chooses.

In the present verse, by listing the recipients of Ṣadaqāt category-wise, Allah Ta'ālā has removed their misunderstanding and told them

that He has himself determined as to who should receive Ṣadaqāt. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only complies with the Divine decree while disbursing Ṣadaqāt – doing nothing on his own or with his personal opinion.

This is also confirmed by the Ḥadīth reported in Abū Dāwūd and Dārqutnī as based on a narration by Sayyidnā Ziyād ibn Ḥārith al-Ṣudā'ī who says: I visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where I noticed that he was sending Muslim forces against my people. I said to him: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, you do not have to send any troops. I guarantee that all of them will submit before you with pleasure.' Then I wrote a letter to my people and all of them embraced Islām. Thereupon, he said: يَا اَخَاصُدَاءِ الْمُطَاعِ فِيْ قَوْمِهٖ (which was like a title saying that this person was the beloved one of his people who followed him!). I submitted: 'I deserve no credit for that. Allah, in His grace, guided them right and they embraced Islām.' I was still present in the sitting, says the narrator, when a person came in asking for something. The answer he gave to him was:

> "Allah Ta'ālā has never handed over the distribution of Ṣadaqāt to any prophet, even to anyone other than a prophet. Instead of that, He has Himself determined eight categories for it. If you are included under one of those eight, I can let you have it. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 168, v. 8)

This was the background in which this verse was revealed. Now, before going to its explanation in full, please understand that Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh* has promised sustenance for the entire creation. Says the Qur'ān: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision – 11:6). However, in His infinite wisdom, he has not done something like making all of them equal in the matter of provision or sustenance – or *rizq* as the Qur'ān says. This would have done away with the difference of rich and poor. This is a vast field of inquiry full of hundreds of wise insights into the moral grooming of human beings and into the proper ordering of the universal system they live under – something that cannot be taken up in details at this place. So, it was in His wisdom that He made someone rich and someone else poor and then fixed a share for the poor and needy in the riches of the rich. It was said: وَفِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ (And, in their wealth, there is a share fixed for the asking and the deprived – 70:24) which was theirs as a matter of right.

First of all, this tells us that the command to take out Ṣadaqah from the wealth of the wealthy is no favor from them. In fact, this is a right of the needy the fulfillment of which is their duty. Then, it also tells us that this right is fixed in the sight of Allah Taʿālā – not that someone decreases or increases it at will, anytime. Pursuant to that, the duty of making the amount of this fixed right widely known was assigned to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, he acted with marked diligence and elan in this matter. He could have informed his Companions about it orally. But, he did not consider it to be sufficient. Instead, he had detailed executive orders written and placed in the custody of Sayyidnā ʿUmar and Sayyidnā ʿAmr ibn Hazām رضى الله عنهما. This clearly proves that the *niṣāb* (threshold) of Zakāh, and the amount of Zakāh in each *niṣāb*, have been fixed by Allah Taʿālā and promulgated through His Messenger to remain valid forever. No one, at any time and in any country, has any right to decrease, increase, change or alter what has been prescribed.

It is correct to say that the obligation of Ṣadaqah and Zakāh was already decreed by revelation during the early stage of Islām in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has cited the verse of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil: فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (So, establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 73:20) in proof because this Sūrah is among those that belong to the initial period of revelation and, along with Ṣalāh, it carries the injunction of Zakāh. However, the narratives of Ḥadīth seem to indicate that, during the initial period of Islām, any particular *niṣāb* for Zakāh, or a particular amount, was not fixed. In its absence, whatever was left behind after having served the needs of a Muslim was spent in the way of Allah. The fixation of *niṣāb* and the declaration of the amount of Zakāh came after Hijrah in Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah. After that, the firmly established system of the receipts of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt was something that came into existence only after the conquest of Makkah.

This verse – with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābiʿīn – describes the disbursement of the same obligatory (*wājib*) Ṣadaqah which is obligatory on Muslims like Ṣalāh, because the heads of disbursement fixed in this verse are the heads of the obligatory Ṣadaqāt. As for the voluntary (*Nafl*) Ṣadaqāt, given the clear statements of Ḥadīth narratives, their range is quite vast. To be precise, they are not

restricted to these eight heads of expenditure.

Though, in the verse appearing above, the general word: صدقات (Ṣadaqāt) has been used – which apparently may include the obligatory and the voluntary both – but, there is a consensus of the Muslim Ummah, on the point that this verse refers only to the obligatory (*wājib*) Ṣadaqāt. It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) whenever used in an absolute sense anywhere in the Qur'ān – while there is no textual evidence to prove that it is voluntary Ṣadaqah – it invariably means obligatory Ṣadaqah at that place.

This verse has been initiated with the word: إنما (*innamā*) which is used for restriction (*haṣr* and *inhiṣār*). Thereby, the very first word in the beginning of the statement speaks for itself that the recipients of Ṣadaqāt being enumerated next are obligatory Ṣadaqāt and must, therefore, be spent on them. In fact, obligatory Ṣadaqāt cannot be spent on any good cause other than them, such as, the preparation for Jihād or making *masjids* and religious schools or other institutions of public welfare. Though, all these projects are necessary and there is great reward for investing in them, but obligatory Ṣadaqāt the quantum of which stands fixed cannot be applied to such projects.

The second word: صدقات (Ṣadaqāt) appearing in the verse is the plural form of Ṣadaqah. Lexically, it denotes a portion of the wealth or property that is spent for the sake of Allah (Qāmūs). In Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said that Ṣadaqah is called Ṣadaqah because it is derived from the root of 'Ṣidq' which means 'truth' and the one who gives something in Ṣadaqah purports that he is true in his word and deed, he has no worldly motives and is spending for the pleasure of Allah only. Therefore, a Ṣadaqah mixed up with a desire to earn a fair name or to project one's personality or any other worldly motive conceivable has been declared to be null and void by the Holy Qur'ān.

As stated earlier too, the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) is general in terms of its real meaning. It is used for voluntary Ṣadaqah as well as for obligatory Zakāh. Its use for *nafl* (voluntary or supererogatory charity) is already very common. However, it has also been used for *farḍ* (obligatory or prescribed alms) at several places in the Qur'ān, for example: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] – 9:103) and the verse: إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ (The Ṣadaqāt [prescribed alms] are only for ...)

under discussion right now. In fact, according to the verification of commentator Al-Qurṭubī, when the Qur'ān mentions the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) in an absolute sense, it invariably means the *farḍ* (obligatory) Ṣadaqah.

In Ḥadīth narratives, the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) has also been used for every good deed, for instance, says the Ḥadīth: 'Meeting a Muslim with a smile is also a *Ṣadaqah*.' Or, 'helping the bearer of a burden carry it is also a *Ṣadaqah*.' Or, 'to share the water drawn from a well for personal use with someone else is also a *Ṣadaqah*.' In these Ḥadīth references, the word: صدقه (*Ṣadaqah*) has been used in its general sense with a figurative touch.

The third word after that begins with: للفقراء (*li' l-fuqarā'*). It will be noted that the letter *lām* appears in the very beginning, a letter used to carry the sense of particularization. Therefore, the sentence would mean that all Ṣadaqāt rightfully belong only to those who have been mentioned later.

Now, we can go to a detailed description of the eight recipients mentioned after that:

Out of these, the first category of recipients is that of *al-fuqarā'* (the poor) followed by the second which is that of *al-masākīn* (the needy or indigent). There is, though, difference of opinion about the real meaning of '*faqīr*' and '*miskīn*.' A '*faqīr*' is one who has nothing while a '*miskīn*' is one who has less than the *niṣāb*.[1] But, they remain the same under the injunction of Zakāh. No difference exists there. The outcome is that a person who does not own wealth or property to the value of *niṣāb* in excess of his or her basic needs shall be a person to whom Zakāh can be given and for that person too this taking of Zakāh is permissible. As for 'basic needs,' included therein is everything like the residential house, utensils in use, clothes and furniture etc. Anyone who has the *niṣāb*, that is, 7 1/2 *tolas*[2] gold, or 52 1/2 tolas[3] of silver, or its equivalent in cash – and is not in debt – then, it is not permissible for such a person to receive Zakāh nor is it permissible for

1. The minimum quantity or amount, or threshold of wealth or property liable to payment of obligatory Zakāh (prescribed alms or poor-due)

2. =87.48 grams.

3. = 612.36 grams.

2 & 3 as determined by Hadrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi رحمة الله عليه in his اوزان شرعيه .

anyone to give it to him. Similarly, a person who has some silver or cash and some gold and the combined market price equals the price of 52 1/2 tolas (612.36 grams) of silver, then, this person too is deemed to have the *niṣāb*. It is not permissible for him to take Zakāh nor is it permissible for anyone to give it to him. But, a person who is not a man of *niṣāb*, however, is strong and healthy to earn his livelihood, and has enough for a day, then, giving Zakāh to him is, no doubt, permissible but what is not permissible is that he goes about asking people to help him out. Many such people ignore this restriction not realizing that stretching their hands before others is Ḥarām (unlawful). Whatever such a person acquires by soliciting has been equated by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with an ember from Hell. (Abū Dāwūd, on the authority of a report from Sayyidnā 'Alī, Qurṭubī)

So, the outcome is that there is no difference in a *'faqīr'* and a *'miskīn'* as far as Zakāh is concerned. But, it does make a difference in the injunction of Waṣiyyah (will). If a will is made for the *'masākīn,'* what kind of people will be eligible to receive the bequeathed amount? And if the will is made for *'fuqarā'* what kind of people will be its recipients? There is no need to describe its details at this place. In brief, the common thing between the two categories – the *'faqīr'* and the *'miskīn'* – is that whoever of the two receives from the property of Zakāh should be a Muslim and should not be the owner of property which is more than his basic needs, or the standard of *niṣāb*.

Common Ṣadaqāt can, however, be given to non-Muslims as well. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: تَصَدَّقُوْا عَلٰى اَهْلِ الْاَدْيَانِ كُلِّهَا (Give Ṣadaqah to people of all religions). But, about the Ṣadaqah of Zakāh, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, while sending Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ to Yaman, had instructed him that Zakāh should be taken from the rich among Muslims and be spent over their poor. Therefore, Zakāh can be spent only among Muslim *fuqarā'* (the poor) and *masākīn* (the needy). However, with the exception of Zakāh, it is permissible to give other Ṣadaqāt – even the *Ṣadaqatu 'l-Fiṭr* – to a non-Muslim *'faqīr.'* (Hidāyah)

Incidentally, the second condition that a person should not be the owner of *niṣāb* mentioned a little earlier becomes self-evident from the very meaning of a *'faqīr'* and a *'miskīn'* – because, either he would have nothing or, at the least, would have less than the fixed amount of *niṣ-*

āb holdings. Therefore, a *'faqīr'* and a *'miskīn'* are common in the sense that they both do not possess property matching the standard value of *niṣāb*. After having mentioned these two categories of recipients, the text describes six more. Out of these, the the first (which is the third in the aggregate list) is that of the collectors of Ṣadaqah which has been described in the text as: اَلْعَامِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا (and those employed to collect them). This refers to those who are appointed by the Islāmic government to collect the Ṣadaqāt of Zakāh and 'Ushr etc. from the people and deposit it in the Baytulmāl (the state treasury). Since these appointees spend all their time in carrying out this service, therefore, taking care of their needs is a responsibility that falls on the Islāmic government. This verse of the Qur'ān has, by allotting a share to them in the disbursement of Zakāh, has categorically determined that the payment for the services rendered by them shall be made from the head of Zakāh.

Actually, Allah Ta'ālā has entrusted the duty of taking Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt from Muslims directly with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, as said in the verse: خُذْمِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] – 9:103) which appears later on in this very Sūrah. Detailed comments about it will be taken up there. However, it is sufficient to mention here that, in the light of this verse, the duty of taking Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt has been placed on the shoulders of the Amīr of Muslims. It is obvious that the Amīr cannot carry out this duty all by himself throughout the country without functional executives and assistants. It is these executives and assistants who have been mentioned in the words: وَالْعَامِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا (and those employed to collect them).

It was to implement the command given in these verses that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had sent many Companions as functional executives responsible for collecting Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt to many regions of the Islāmic state. The payment he had made for the services rendered by them was, as instructed in the verse, from the very amount collected as Zakāh. Included among such people were Ṣaḥābah who were rich. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: *ṣadaqah* is not *ḥalāl* for anyone rich (*al-ghaniyy*: owner of *māl*, that is, wealth and property) except five persons: (1) One who has set out for Jihād where he does not have necessary financial support with him – though, he may be rich back home. (2) The 'Āmil of Ṣadaqah (the collec-

tor) employed to carry out this duty. (3) One who, though, owns wealth and property, but is in debt for more than the worth of what he has. (4) One who buys Ṣadaqah property from a *'miskīn'* (needy person) against cash. (5) One who has been given a gift of property acquired as Ṣadaqah by some poor person (*'faqīr'*).

As for the problem of determining the proportion of the amount of money to be paid to those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt, the answer lies in the rule that it will be paid in accordance with the status of their working hours and performance. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Aḥkam al-Qur'ān and Qurṭubī)

Of course, it will be necessary that the salaries of the employees do not go higher than a half of the total Zakāh. If the collection of Zakāh is low, so low that, after the disbursement of salaries to employees, not even that half remains available, then, salaries would have to be reduced. More than half shall not be spent. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, Ẓahiriyyah)

What has been said above shows that the amount of money given to those employed to collect Ṣadaqah from the head of Zakāh is not given to them as Ṣadaqah, instead of which, it is a payment in return for their service. Therefore, they deserve to get this amount despite being rich – and it is permissible to give this amount to them from the Zakāh funds. Out of the eight heads of Zakāh disbursement, this is the only head in which the amount of Zakāh is given as payment in return for services rendered. Otherwise, Zakāh is the very name of the gift given to the poor without being a return for any services – and if a poor person was given something from Zakāh funds against some service rendered, Zakāh remained unpaid.

For this reason, two questions arise here – firstly, how was Zakāh property given in return for services rendered, and secondly, how could this Zakāh property become *ḥalāl* (lawful) for the rich person? Both these questions have the same answer – that we should understand the real status of those employed to collect Ṣadaqah. The status of these employees is that of the authorized representatives of *al-fuqarā,'* the poor ones, and everyone knows that the taking of possession by an authorized representative is regarded to be as good as the possession taken by the principal himself. If a person makes someone his representative authorized to recover his debt and the other person in debt hands over the amount of debt to this authorized representative, then, soon after the possession taken by the representative, the li-

ability of the debtor stands discharged. So, when the amount of Zakāh has been recovered by those employed to collect it in their capacity as the authorized representatives of the poor, i.e. the *fuqarā'*, then, the amount of Zakāh received from people stands duly paid. Now, this whole amount lies under the ownership of the *fuqarā'* on whose behalf the *'āmilīn* have received it in the capacity of their authorized representative. Hence, the amount given to them in return for their services is in fact given to them by the '*fuqarā'*' as a compensation of services they have rendered for them, because once *zakāh* is received by a *faqīr* or his agent, he may give it to anyone against his services.

Now remains the question: The *fuqarā'* never made these people their authorized representatives. How, then, did they become their agents in fact? The answer is that the head of a Muslim State (the 'Amīr) has been appointed by Allah Ta'ālā as a representative of all the poor to collect and disburse *zakāh* on their behalf. The logical consequence of this arrangement is that the persons appointed by an 'Amīr, being his deputies, are also taken to be the representatives of the poor.

To sum up, that which was given to those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt (prescribed alms) was really no Zakāh as such. Instead of that, it was given to them as compensation in return for the service rendered by them on behalf of the poor recipients of Zakāh. It is like a poor person making someone an attorney for his case and paying for his services from what he has received from Zakāh funds. In this situation, the payment of attorney's fee cannot be termed as the payment of Zakāh.

Special Note

Details given above also tell us that those who collect Ṣadaqāt and Zakāh for Islāmic religious schools and organizations (without being appointed by an Islamic state for that purpose) are not included in "*'āmilīn*' (collectors of *zakāh*) as contemplated in the Holy Qur'ān.

The reason is that neither the individual poor persons have authorized them to receive *zakāh* on their behalf, nor the head of an Islamic state has appointed them as such. Their correct position is that the *zakāh* - payers have made them their agent to disburse *zakāh* among the deserving people. Therefore, they can neither draw their salaries from *zakāh*, nor can the obligation of a *zakāh*-payer be discharged by their possession, unless they pay it to a person entitled to receive *zakāh*.

Generally, serious negligence is shown in this matter. Many institutions collect Zakāh funds and keep it for years. Zakāh payers think that their Zakāh stands paid – although, their Zakāh will stand paid only when the amount given by them has been disbursed in favor of its recipients.

Similarly, there are many others who would unknowingly take such people to be included under the Qur'ānic injunction about the collectors of Ṣadaqah and go on to pay their salaries from the funds of Zakāh itself. This is non-permissible, for the givers and the takers both.

Another Question: Payment for 'Ibādah

Another question should be clarified here. It is inferred from some Qur'ānic indicators and narrations of Ḥadīth that taking wages and compensation on 'Ibādah is *ḥarām* (unlawful, forbidden). The Musnad of Aḥmad reports a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Shibl رضی اللہ عنہ according to which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: اِقْرَأُوا الْقُرْآنَ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا بِهٖ (Recite the Qur'ān but do not eat by means of it). In some other reports, the compensation taken on the Qur'ān has been called a piece of Hell. It is on this basis that many jurists of Muslim Ummah have held that the taking of wages or compensation for any act of 'Ibādah (worship) is not permissible. Then, it is also evident that the function of collecting prescribed alms is a religious mission and an act of *'ibādah*. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has called it a kind of Jihād. According to this principle it should not have been lawful to receive any remuneration for collecting *zakāh*. But, this verse of the Holy Qur'ān has clearly declared it to be permissible and has included it as one of the eight heads under which Zakāh can be disbursed.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has taken up this question in his Commentary. He has said that taking compensation for 'Ibādāt (acts of worship) that are obligatory (*farḍ*) or compulsory individually (*wājib al-'ain*) is absolutely *ḥarām* (unlawful). But, taking any compensation for duties called *farḍ al-kifāyah* is permissible in accordance with this very verse. Farḍ al-Kifāyah means that a duty has been imposed on the entire Muslim community or on a whole city as a collective obligation. But, it is not the duty of every individual to do it. If some of the people there fulfill the duty, the rest stand absolved. Yes – if no one does it – everyone becomes a sinner.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has also said that this very verse proves that

taking a compensation for leading congregational prayers (*Imāmah*) and delivering sermons (*Khiṭābah*) is also permissible – because, they too are *wājib al-Kifāyah* (compulsory in the degree of sufficiency) and not *wājib-al-'ain* (compulsory individually). Similarly, the areas of teaching Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and other religious sciences are no different. These are duties that must be carried out. The entire Muslim Ummah is responsible for it. This is Farḍ al-Kifāyah on the community. If some people fulfill this obligation, others stand absolved. Therefore, if some compensation or salary is taken for it, that too will be permissible.

The fourth among the eight categories of recipients of Zakāh is that of 'people whose hearts are to be won.' The Qur'ān calls them: مؤلفة القلوب These were people who were given Ṣadaqāt so that their attitude towards Islām could be mollified. The general impression about this category is that it included both Muslims and non-Muslims. The object was to persuade non-Muslims in favor of Islām and neo-Muslims to become more firm. Those who were already staunch Muslims were helped to guide their people right through such measures. Then, there were people among non-Muslims whose evil had to be avoided through a policy of appeasement. And there were people who would listen to no sermon or sword. The only language they understood was the language of favor and generosity. They too came closer to reconciliation through this policy. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did whatever was legally possible to bring people from the darkness of disbelief into the light of faith. However, after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Islām had become politically strong and the initial plans to avoid the threat of disbelievers or to provide support to neo-Muslims did not remain valid anymore. What was expedient then had lost its expediency. So, that share also came to an end. Some Muslim jurists have taken the position that it has been 'abrogated.' This position is attributed to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas, may the mercy of Allah be upon them.

However, many others hold that the share of this category has not been abrogated. That it was allowed to lapse during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهم means that it was allowed to lapse because there was no need for it. However, if such a need does come up at some later time, it could be given again. This is the juristic view of Imām Zuhrī, Qāḍī 'Abd al-Wahhāb, ibn al-'Arabī, Imāms Shāfi'ī

and Aḥmad. But, the most authentic position is that non-Muslims were never given a share from Ṣadaqāt at any time whatsoever, nor are they included under the category of *mu'allafah al-quloob* as contemplated in the present verse 60.

In his Tafsīr, Imām al-Qurṭubī has given a detailed list of people to whom the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had given a share from the head of Ṣadaqāt. The purpose was to win their hearts through persuasion. At the end of his list, Al-Qurṭubī has this to say: وَبِالْجُمْلَةِ فَكُلُّهُمْ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ فِيْهِمْ كافر It means: 'To sum it up, it can be said that all recipients under this category were Muslims and there was no *kāfir* included therein.'

Similarly, it appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī: لَمْ يَثْبُتْ اَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اَعْطٰى اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ لِلْاِيْلَافِ شَيْئًا مِّنَ الزَّكٰوةِ It means: 'There is no report to prove that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has ever given a share to a *kāfir* (disbeliever) from Zakāh property in order to persuade him favorably.' This is supported by what is said in Tafsīr al-Kashshāf: 'The details of the recipients of Ṣadaqāt have been given here to refute the allegations of disbelievers and hypocrites who used to raise objections against the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that he did not give them their share from the Ṣadaqāt. The purpose of giving these details in this verse is to tell them that disbelievers had no right in Ṣadaqah properties. If the disbelievers were also included under the category of *mu'allafah al-quloob*, there was no need for this answer in refutation.

Tafsīr Maẓharī has also clarified the error into which some people have fallen because of some Ḥadīth narratives which seem to prove that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has given gifts to some non-Muslims. For example, there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī which says that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم gave some gifts to Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah when he was a *kāfir*. About it, quoting Imām al-Nawawi, the author of the Tafsīr says that these gifts were not from Zakāh. Rather, they were given from the *khums* (one- fifth) of the spoils of the battle of Ḥunain deposited in the Baitu'l-Māl – and it is obvious that spending from this head of the Baitu'l-Māl both on Muslims or non-Muslims is permissible under the consensus of Muslim jurists. Then, he says: Imām al-Baihaqī, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Imām Ibn Kathīr and others have concurred that this gift was not given from Zakāh, but was given from the one-fifth of spoils.

A useful supplementary note

From here we also come to know that wealth and property belonging to Ṣadaqāt were, though, deposited in the Baitu'l-Māl during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, but they were kept under a totally separate account. Similarly, other heads of the Baitu'l-Māl, such as, the *Khums* of *Ghanīmah* (one-fifth of spoils) or the *Khums* of *Ma'ādin* (one-fifth of mines and quarries) etc., had their own separate accounts and modes of disbursement. Muslim jurists have given details in this connection. According to them there should be four heads of accounts in the Baitu'l-Māl separate from each other. The main instruction given is that keeping the accounts separate is not enough, instead of that, each head should have a separate Baitu'l-Māl so that each one of them exercises full control when spending it on approved recipients and categories. Of course, if a particular head faces shortage of funds, these can be borrowed from another head of accounts and spent as necessary. These heads of the Baitu'l-Māl are as follows:

1. Khums al-Ghanāim: The One-Fifth of Spoils: This is property acquired from disbelievers as an outcome of war. Out of its five shares, four are distributed among Mujāhidīn while the fifth share is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. Then, there is the one-fifth of mines (Khums al-Ma'ādin). A one-fifth of whatever is mined from different kinds of quarries is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. Then, there is the one-fifth of buried treasures. This is known as the Khums of Rikāz. It refers to any old treasure dug out of the ground. A one-fifth of this too is the right of the Baitu'l-Mal. All these three kinds of Khums (one-fifth) are included in one single head of the Baitu'l-Māl.

2. Ṣadaqāt: This includes Zakāh, Ṣadaqātu 'l-Fiṭr, and 'Ushr of their lands paid by Muslims.

3. Kharāj and Fai' Property which includes tax collected from lands owned by non-Muslims, Jizyah paid by them, taxes on commercial enterprises run by them (*al-kharāj*) and it included all properties acquired from non-Muslims with their consent and agreement (*al-fai'*).

4. Ḍawā'i' (Lost properties) which included what lost or remained unclaimed as well as property left by a person having no heir.

Though, expenditures under these four heads are separate, but the right of the poor and the needy has been set aside in all four of these heads. This shows the particular care taken to empower the weaker section of the society – a certain hallmark of the Muslim state indeed. Otherwise, elite classes keep getting the opportunities to grow among usual social systems of the world at the expense of the poor ones. The poor never see their day. What came up as a reaction of this situation in the form of socialism and communism was far from being natural. In fact, it was like running from the rain and resting under the drain pipe, not to say much about its harmful effects for human morals.

To sum up, an Islāmic government has four Baitu'l-Māls for four different heads with the right of the poor and needy secured in all four. The expenditures of the first three among these have been fixed and explained clearly by the Holy Qur'ān as follows. The description of the expenditures of the first head, that is, of the one-fifth of spoils (Khums al-Ghanāim) appears at the beginning of the tenth part in Sūrah Al-Anfāl (verse 41). The description of the expenditures of the second head, that is, of Ṣadaqāt has been taken up in verse 60 of Sūrah Al-Taubah that is under study right now. The third head, technically known as the property of *al-fai'*, finds a detailed mention in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr. Many expenditures of the Islāmic government, such as, those on the military, and on the salaries of civil servants, are disbursed from this head. The fourth head of al-Ḍawā'i' covered lost or unclaimed property or property having no inheritor. It was set aside for the disabled, the handicapped, destitute men and women and abandoned children, following the practice and teachings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to which the rightly guided Caliphs of Islām, faithfully adhered. (Shāmī, Kitābu'z-Zakāh)

Incidentally, the saying of Muslim jurists, that the four heads of the Baitu'l-Māl should be kept separate and that the expenditures therein should be incurred as approved, has its proof in the Qur'ān, the practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the adherence of the rightly guided Caliphs to that practice.

After this supplementary note, we can now revert to the original issue of *mu'allafah al-quloob*. It is already established that no *zakāh* was paid to a non-Muslim under this category. Therefore, they stand excluded from the recipients of *zakāh*. Now, left there are the new Mus-

lims who can fall under this head. All the Muslim jurists are unanimous on the point that the poor new Muslims are eligible to get their share under this category. However, there is a difference of opinion about the rich ones. Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad are of the view that all the Muslim converts who need a sympathetic attitude to make them firm on Islamic beliefs can receive *zakāh* under the category of '*mu'allafah-al-quloob*' even though they are not poor in the sense that they own the *niṣāb*. The basic principle according to them is that poverty is not a condition for the eligibility for *zakāh* under each head from the eight categories mentioned in the verse. On the contrary, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik are of the view that Muslim '*mu'allafah-al-quloob*' can be given *zakāh* only if they are poor and do not own the *niṣāb*. If they own the *niṣāb*, they cannot receive *zakāh* even under this category. Both these Imams hold that poverty is the basic condition for all the eight categories mentioned in the verse, with the sole exception of '*āmilīn*' as explained earlier. The debtors, the wayfarers and the slaves as well can receive *zakāh* only if they are poor in their given state of affairs, even though may have wealth otherwise.

This explanation shows that despite their difference of opinion in this particular aspect, all of them agree on the point that '*mu'allafah al-qulūb*' as a category of the recepients of *zakāh* still holds good and has never been repealed or abrogated.

Up to this point, four out of the eight recipients of Ṣadaqāt have been identified. The right of these four has been introduced with the addition of the letter *lām* as in: لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ (*li'l-fuqarā' wa'l-masākīn*: for the poor and for the needy). The form has been changed while mentioning the next four recipients where the initial letter *lām* has been replaced with the letter *fī* as in: وَفِى الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِيْنَ (and in [freeing] slaves and in [releasing] those in debt). Al-Zamakhsharī has given a reason for this nuance of language in his Tafsīr al-Kashshāf. According to him, this is a device employed to indicate that the last four recipients are more deserving as compared to the first four, because the letter *fī* is used to denote attending circumstances or conditions which yields the meaning that Ṣadaqāt should be placed 'in' or within these people. Then, the reason for their being more deserving is their being more in need – because, a slave owned by someone suffers more as compared to

poor people in general. Similarly, a person in debt hounded by his lenders is in deeper trouble as compared to common poor and needy for he has the additional worry as to how he is going to pay off his debt which is certainly more disturbing than the rest of his usual needs.

Out of the remaining four categories of recipients, the first one mentioned here is that of وَفِی الرِّقَابِ (*wa fi 'r-riqāb*: and in [freeing] slaves). Riqāb is the plural form of *raqabah*. Actually, it means the neck. But, in recognized usage, it is also used to allude to a person whose neck is shackled in the chains of slavery.

What is the meaning of *ar-riqāb* in this verse? Interpretations of jurists differ. The majority of jurists and Ḥadīth experts agree that it refers to slaves who enter into a deal with their masters that they would earn the amount specified by them, give it to them as they earn, and once the agreed amount is paid off, they shall be free. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, such a slave is known as *mukātab*. The master of such a slave allows him to earn through business or employment and give the income to the master. In the present verse, *fī 'r-riqāb* means that this person should be helped to secure his freedom from his master who should be given a share from Zakāh funds to write off the amount due against the slave.

There is a consensus of commentators and jurists that this kind of slaves is the intended sense of the expression: وَفِی الرِّقَابِ (*wa fi r'riqāb*: and in [freeing] slaves) which requires that they should be helped to become free by paying the amount due from Zakāh funds. In cases other than this, such as, buying other slaves and setting them free, or entering into a deal with their masters that they would set them free against an agreed amount of Zakāh, there is a difference of opinion among major Muslim jurists. The majority of the Imāms of Islāmic jurisprudence – Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal and others, may the mercy of Allah be on all of them – do not take this to be permissible. Imām Mālik agrees with the majority in one version (*riwayah*) only when he declares the sense of *fi r'riqāb* as restricted to *mukātab* slaves (on freedom-against-money deal with master). In another version (*riwāyah*), it has also been reported from Imām Mālik that he included common slaves under the definition of *fi 'r-riqāb* as well as gave the permission to buy slaves from Zakāh amounts and free them. (Aḥkam al-Qur'ān ibn al-'Arabī al-Mālikī)

The majority of Imāms and jurists, who do not consider it permissible, have a juristic difficulty in doing so. If a slave was bought from Zakāh funds, and freed, the problem is that the very definition of Ṣadaqah does not fit right in his case – because, Ṣadaqah is a property given to someone deserving without getting something in return. Now, should the amount of Zakāh be given to the master, then, it is obvious that he is neither deserving of Zakāh, nor the amount of money being given to him is without an expected return. As for the slave, who is deserving of Zakāh, the amount was never given to him personally. This is another matter that the benefit of the amount paid to the master somehow reached the slave in that he was bought and freed. But, freeing does not get to be included under the definition of Ṣadaqah – and why would someone surrender the real meaning without any reason and go by the figurative or general sense of Ṣadaqah unnecessarily? This has no justification. Then, it is also obvious that, in the subject verse, what is being described is nothing but the categories of the recipients of Zakāh. Therefore, anything to which the definition of Ṣadaqah does not fit simply cannot be meant by *fi 'r-riqāb*. And if, this amount was to be given to the slave himself, then, the slave does not have the right to own. The result will be that it will automatically become the property of the master. Then, the matter of releasing or not releasing the slave will also continue to be in the control of his master.

It is because of this juristic difficulty that the majority of Imāms and jurists hold the view that the Qur'ānic expression: فِى الرِّقَابِ (*fi 'r-riqāb*) refers to *mukātab* slaves only. This also tells us about the standard rule of conduct in this matter. To give Ṣadaqah properly, the condition is that its giver makes a deserving person its owner and sees to it that the amount has passed into his possession – because, until the deserving person has taken the amount in his possession, as its owner, Zakāh remains unpaid.

The sixth category of recipients: اَلْغَارِمِيْنَ (*al-ghārimīn*: and in [releasing] those in debt) is the plural of *ghārim* which means a person in debt. It has been mentioned earlier that the fifth and sixth categories of recipients introduced with the letter *fī* are ahead of the first four recipients in their claim of preference. Therefore, giving out to free a slave or to release a person from debt is more merit worthy than giving to the poor and the needy in general. However, the condition is

that the person in debt does not have enough funds to pay off that debt – because, lexically, the word: *ghārim* is applied only to such a person in debt. And some Imāms also add a condition that this person should not have borrowed for something impermissible. If someone goes in debt for something sinful, such as, to pay for liquor and its likes, or spends on impermissible customs of marriages and deaths, then, such a client will not be helped from the head of Zakāh so that he is not encouraged in his sin and extravagance.

The seventh category of disbursement appears in the words: فِی سَبِیْلِ اللّٰہِ (*fī sabīlillāh*: in the way of Allah). It will be noted that the letter *fī* has been repeated here once again. According to Tafsīr al-Kashshāf, the purpose of this repetition is to indicate that this area of expenditure is more merit worthy as compared to those mentioned earlier. It has two benefits. The first is helping a poor person. The second is assisting in a religious cause. The reason is that *fī sabīlillāh* either denotes a *mujāhid* who does not have the means to buy necessary weapons and war supplies, or it means the person who must fulfill the obligation of Ḥajj but who does not have the necessary financial support to complete his due duty. These two duties are purely religious. They are acts of worship. Therefore, by spending Zakāh funds on them one helps a poor person and supports someone do his 'Ibādah. On the same analogy, Muslim jurists have included students of the schools of Islāmic learning under this category as they too take it to fulfill what is an act of 'Ibādah in the way of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Ẓahīriyyah)

The author of Badā'i' has said that one who wishes to undertake an act of sincere 'Ibādah and needs financial support to do it will be taken as included in the category of *fī sabīlillāh* – subject to the condition that he does not have enough funds to carry it out. The work of teaching and transmitting religion along with the establishment of allied institutions of promotion and publication are some examples. If someone deserving Zakāh elects to take up this work, he may be helped out with Zakāh funds, but this help cannot be extended to a rich man who owns the *niṣāb*.

Details appearing above show that all explanations of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) under different circumstances carry the condition of poverty and need alongside. The rich man who owns the *niṣāb* does

not have a share in this head too – except that his present holdings may be insufficient for the needs of Jihād or Ḥajj he is going to undertake. Call him rich because he has property above the *niṣāb*. In fact, such a person has been called rich in Ḥadīth. But, in the final analysis, he too turns out to be a poor and needy person in terms of the amount of funds he needs for Jihād or Ḥajj – and this he does not have with him! Shaykh ibn Humām has said in Fatḥ al-Qadīr: The words used to describe recipients mentioned in the verse of Ṣadaqāt prove that they deserve what they do on the basis of poverty and need. The words for the poor and the needy are obvious by themselves. Other words used for freeing of slaves, releasing from debt, in the way of Allah and for the wayfarer also suggest that they receive shares to alleviate their needs. However, those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt receive their share in return for the services rendered by them. Therefore, in that, the rich and the poor are equal. This is similar to what has been briefly mentioned earlier under the category of 'those in debt.' A person owes a debt of Rupees ten thousand.[1] He has Rupees five thousand with him. He can be given Zakāh up to Rs. Five thousand, because the funds he has with him will be taken as not with him due to the debt.

A word of Caution

The literal meaning of *fī sabīlillāh* is very general and very common. Anything done for the good pleasure of Allah is included under *fī sabīlillāh* in the light of this popular sense. Unfortunately, there are people who wish to understand the Qur'ān through a literal translation alone. They would skip the explanations and statements of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and ignore the sayings of major commentators. As a result, they fall into error. One such error shows up when they look at *fī sabīlillāh* and find it spacious enough to accommodate everything they fancy. Under this head of Zakāh, they have included everything that is considered to be good or religious. Under this umbrella, they have included the building of mosques, religious schools, hospitals, inns, even the provision of public services like wells, bridges and roads. Then, they do not seem to forget the salaries and contingent expenses of the institutions of public service. All these, they include under *fī sabīlillāh* and declare them to be worth receiving Zakāh funds. This is absolutely wrong and very much against the consensus

1. Approximately a little less than $200.

of the Muslim Ummah. This is something already decided clearly and categorically. There are statements of the noble Ṣaḥābah, the direct disciples of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had learnt and understood the Qur'ān from him. Then, there are explanations of this expression passed on to us from the most learned authorities from among the Tābi'īn. All of them restrict the expression to Ḥujjāj and Mujāhidīn.

It appears in a Ḥadīth that someone had given a camel as religious endowment in the way of Allah (*fī sabīlillāh*). For it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Use this camel to carry Ḥujjāj (Ḥajj pilgrims) on their journey.' (Al-Mabsūṭ, Al-Sarakhsī, p. 10, v. 3)

Imāms Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr are known exegetes who limit themselves to explaining the Qur'ān through Ḥadīth reports only. They both have particularized *fī sabīlillāh* with *mujāhidīn* and *ḥujjāj* who do not have the wherewithal necessary for Jihād or Ḥajj. As for jurists who have included students in religion or servants of good causes in this category, they have done so subject to the condition that they should be poor and needy. And it is obvious that the poor and the needy are in themselves the first among the recipients of Zakāh. Even if they were not included under the sense of *fī sabīlillāh*, still they would have deserved receiving Zakāh. But, no one from among the four Imāms and jurists of Muslim Ummah ever said that expenditures on institutions of public welfare, building of mosques and religious schools and the rest of their functional needs are included under the head of Zakāh disbursements. In fact, they have made it very clear that spending Zakāh funds for this purpose is impermissible. Jurists from different schools of Islāmic jurisprudence have written about it in great details. The names of some of them are being given as follows: Ḥanafī jurist Al-Sarakhṣī in al-Mabsūṭ [p. 202,v. 2] and Sharḥ al-Siyar [p. 244, v. 4], Shāfi'ī jurist Abū 'Ubayd in Kitāb al-Amwāl, Mālikī jurist Dardīr in Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl [p.161, v. 1] and Al-muwaffaq in al-Mughnī.

Other than the clarifications from authorities of Tafsīr and jurists of Islām referred to earlier, a little thought over this matter will help us understand the problem quickly. Let us think for a moment. If this field of Zakāh was so all-embracing that it could accommodate spending on every act of worship and virtue, then, the identification of these

eight recipients in the Qur'ān becomes (God forbid) totally redundant. So does the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم cited earlier where he said that Allah Ta'ālā has not delegated the authority to determine the recipients of Ṣadaqāt even to a prophet, in fact, He has Himself determined the eight categories of its recipients. This tells us that the element of universal application visible to an unaware person from a literal translation of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) is not what Allah means. Instead, it means what stands proved from the words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the related clarifications of the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭābi'īn.

The eighth category of Zakāh disbursement is: ابن السبيل (*ibn al-sabīl*: wayfarer). Sabīl means way and the word: ابن (*ibn*) is used essentially for a son. But, in Arab usage, the words: ابن (*ibn*: son), اب (*ab*: father) and اخ (*akh*: brother) etc. are also used for things which are deeply related with someone. It is according to this usage that a wayfarer is referred to as '*ibn al-sabīl*' – for the simple reason that a wayfarer is deeply related to traversing distances and reaching destinations. As a technical term of Zakāh categories, it means a traveler who does not have necessary funds with him, even if he may be a rich person in his home country. Zakāh may be given to such a traveler so that he can satisfy his needs en route and return home in peace.

At this point, the discussion about the eight categories of recipients of Ṣadaqāt and Zakāh mentioned in verse 60 has reached its completion. Now, follow some other religious issues which relate to all these categories equally.

The issue of *Tamlīk* (Transfer of Ownership)

The majority of Muslim jurists agrees that, even in the fixed eight categories of recipients, the condition for a valid payment of Zakāh is that someone deserving should be given possession of Zakāh property as its owner. If money was spent for the benefit of these very people – without having made them possess it as its owner – Zakāh will remain unpaid. This is the reason why the four Imāms and the majority of Muslim jurists agree that it is not permissible to spend Zakāh funds either on the construction of mosques, religious schools, hospitals and orphanages, or on other functional needs related to them. There is no doubt that the benefit of such projects does reach the poor, and all others who qualify as Zakāh recipients, but the fact that these things

have not passed on into their possession as owners makes Zakāh invalid.

However, in orphanages where meals and clothes are given to orphans as being owned by them, then, it is possible to spend Zakāh funds to the extent of this specific expenditure. Similarly, the cost of the medicine supplied to the poor in need, by making them its owner, could be charged to the Zakāh fund. Likewise, Muslim jurists say that the coffin of an heirless dead body cannot be provided from Zakāh funds, because the deceased is not capable of becoming an owner. Yes, it is possible that the amount of Zakāh is given to someone poor and deserving – and he, out of his free will, spends this amount on the coffin of the heirless deceased. In the same manner, if this deceased person is in debt, this debt cannot be paid off from Zakāh funds directly. Yes, if the deceased person's inheritors are poor and deserve Zakāh, then the amount can be given to them with the right to possess and own it. Once they become the 'owner' of this amount, they can – out of their choice and free will – vacate the debt of the deceased from this amount. Correspondingly, as pointed out earlier, the construction of public works does bring benefits for those who deserve Zakāh, but because they have no right of ownership established into the arrangement, Zakāh remains invalid.

As we have said before, all four Mujtahid Imāms – Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal – as well as the majority of Muslim jurists agree with these rulings. Further clarifications appear in easily available writings of jurists from the four schools of Islāmic jurisprudence.

Also added here are a few points not mentioned during the earlier discussion.

The Shāfi'ī jurist, Imām Abū 'Ubayd has said in Kitābu 'l-Amwāl that it was not permissible to spend Zakāh funds to pay off the debt owed by a deceased person, or in paying the cost of his funeral, or to build *masājid*, or to dig canals for public use. Imām Sufyān al-Thawrī and other Imāms concur with the ruling that spending on these undertakings leaves Zakāh unpaid – because, these are not one of those eight heads of expenditure mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Similarly, the Ḥanbalī jurist, Al-muwaffaq has said in al-Mughnī

that spending Zakāh funds on any undertaking of public service – other than the areas of spending mentioned in the Qur'ān – is not permissible. Building mosques, bridges, and drinking water facilities or repairing public roads, supplying coffins for the deceased, feeding guests and other undertakings of this nature are apparent examples. No doubt, they are reward worthy deeds, but are not included under the specified expenditures of Ṣadaqāt (*zakāh*).

The well-recognized author of Badā'i', while discussing the condition of '*tamlīk*' (the act of transferring the possession and ownership to the recipient) as basic to making the payment of Zakāh proper and valid, has also provided textual proof for it. In the Qur'ān, he points out, Zakāh and obligatory Ṣadaqāt have been generally mentioned with the word: ايتاء ('*ītā*' meaning giving in the sense of granting, offering). Listed here are some examples of the use of this word: أَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 2:277; 9:5,11; 22:41); أَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 2:43,83,110; 4:77; 22:78; 24:56; 73:20); إِقَامِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَإِيْتَآءِ الزَّكٰوةِ (establishment of Ṣalāh and giving of Zakāh – 21:73; 24:37) and آتُوا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ (give its due [Zakāh] on the day of its harvest – 6:141). So, lexically this word is used in the sense of giving as gift. Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān اَلْإِيْتَاءُ الْإِعْطَاءُ وَخُصَّ وَضْعُ الصَّدَقَةِ فِى الْقُرْآنِ بِالْإِيْتَاءِ (The word *al-'ītā*' [giving] means giving as gift; presenting and the giving of the obligatory Ṣadaqah has been particularly associated with this word in the Qur'ān). Thus, the real sense of presenting something to someone as gift could be no other but that the recipient has been made its owner.

Firstly, the use of the word *al-'ītā*' in that sense is not restricted to Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt only. It has actually been used in the Qur'ān in the very sense of making someone an owner of what is given, for instance: آتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ (give women their dowers – 4:4). It is obvious that the payment of dower is recognized as valid only when the husband has passed on the amount of dower into the possession and ownership of his wife.

Secondly, Zakāh has been expressed by the alternate word: Ṣadaqah in the Holy Qur'ān: انما الصدقت للفقراء (The Ṣadaqāt [prescribed alms] are only for the poor - 60). This is a subtle explanation because Ṣadaqah, in the real sense, means to let a poor person possess, own (and spend it at will).

It should be borne in mind that feeding someone out of mercy or spending in public welfare projects is not called Ṣadaqah in the real sense. Shaykh ibn al-Humām says in Fatḥ al-Qadīr: 'Making a poor person the owner of what is being given is Ṣadaqah in the real sense.' Similarly, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: 'The word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) is another name for Tamlīk (transfer of ownership).' (Jaṣṣāṣ, p. 152, v. 2)

Some Important points about the Proper Payment of Zakāh

One point arises out of a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet ﷺ had given instructions about the collection of Ṣadaqāt to Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal by saying: خُذْهَا مِنْ أَغْنِيَائِهِمْ وَرُدَّهَا فِيْ فُقَرَائِهِمْ : 'Take it (Ṣadaqāt) from the rich among them (Muslims) and disburse it back to the poor among them.' Based on this, Muslim jurists have said that the Zakāh of a city or township should not be sent to another city or township without the need to do so. Instead of that, poor people living in the same city or township are more deserving of it. Of course, if the near relatives of a person are poor, and live in another city, then, he can send his Zakāh to them – because, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given the glad tidings of a two-fold reward in that situation.

Likewise, if the state of poverty and hunger prevailing in another township appears to be more acute than the condition in one's own city of residence, then, it can be sent there as well – because, the purpose of giving Ṣadaqāt is to remove the need of poor people. This was the reason why Sayyidnā Mu'ādh used to accept clothes as part of the Ṣadaqāt paid in Yaman so that he could send these for the poor emigrants of Madīnah. (al-Qurṭubī with reference to Dārquṭnī)

If a person lives in a certain city while his property is located in another, then, the city where he lives in person shall be taken into consideration, because this is the person addressed for the payment of Zakāh. (Qurṭubī)

Rulings:

1. For payment of Zakāh due against a certain property, it is also permissible to take out the fortieth part of that particular property and give it to those deserving – such as, cloth, crockery, furniture and things like that stocked for commercial sales. Similarly, one can also determine the amount of Zakāh by calculating the total value of the property and distribute it over those deserving. Doing that stands

proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Āḥādīth. (Qurṭubī) And some leading jurists recommend that, in our time, giving the equivalent in cash is much better, because the needs of poor people vary in nature and number. Cash can be used for whatever is necessary.

2. If one's near relatives are poor and deserve Zakāh, giving Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt to them is much better. It brings two rewards, one for the Ṣadaqah itself and the other for taking care of a near relative (*ṣilah al-raḥim*). In this case, it is simply not necessary that the recipients be told that they were being given Ṣadaqah or Zakāh. It may as well be given as some gift or favor so that the nice person who takes it does not feel humiliated.

3. There is a religious problem that bothers people frequently. For example, there is a person who, by his word or deed gives the impression of being needy, and asks for help from Ṣadaqāt etc. Now, is it necessary for people who give Ṣadaqah to first investigate his real background and give him nothing of it when approached? According to relevant reports from Ḥadīth and the statements of Muslim jurists, this is not necessary. Instead, if there is an overwhelming likelihood, as gathered from the obvious state he is in, suggesting that the person in question is really poor and needy, then, Zakāh can be given to him. It appears in Ḥadīth that some people came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a very broken-down condition. He asked people to collect Ṣadaqāt for them. The reasonably good collection thus made was given to them. He did not consider it necessary to investigate into their inward background. (Qurṭubī)

4. But, in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Al-Qurṭubī says that one in debt is also one of the recipients of Zakāh. If a person says that he owes so much in debt and that he should be given Zakāh money to pay it back, then, he should be asked to prove that debt. (Qurṭubī) If so, it is fairly evident that such investigation is not difficult to make in the cases of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) and *ibn al-sabīl* (wayfarer) as well. Investigations should be made as necessary when spending on these heads.

5. Giving Zakāh money to one's relatives is more reward-worthy, but husband and wife cannot give to each other, nor can parents and children do so. The reason is that giving to them amounts to keeping it in one's own pocket. Since their expenditures are generally combined,

a husband giving Zakāh money to his wife or the wife to her husband does not mean much. In reality, the whole remains in their use. The same holds good for parents and children and the same rule operates in the case of the children of children, the grandfather and the great-grandfather – in that giving Zakāh to them is not permissible.

6. If a person gave Zakāh to another person taking him to be, in his estimation, deserving and legally qualified to receive Zakāh, but found out later that he was either his own slave or a *kāfir*, then, Zakāh will remain unpaid. It should be given again because the ownership of a slave is nothing but the ownership of the master. Here, he is still owned by him, therefore, Zakāh remains unpaid. As for the *kāfir* (disbeliever), he is no recipient of Zakāh.

7. In addition to that, if it is proved later that the person who was given Zakāh was rich, or a Hāshimite Sayyid, that is, a lineal descendant of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or a father, or son, or wife, or husband, then, it is not necessary to repay the Zakāh. The reason is that the amount of Zakāh has gone out of his ownership and has already reached its place of reward with Allah. As for the error in determining the right recipient due to some misunderstanding, it should be taken as forgiven. (al-Durr al-Mukhtār) The explanation of the verse of Ṣadaqāt and the details of necessary issues related to it end here.

Verses 61 - 66

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ اُذُنٌ ؕ قُلْ اُذُنُ خَيْرٍ
لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾
يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوْكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗۤ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّرْضُوْهُ
اِنْ كَانُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّهٗ مَنْ يُّحَادِدِ اللّٰهَ
وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاَنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيْمُ
﴿٦٣﴾ يَحْذَرُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ اَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُوْرَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِيْ
قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ قُلِ اسْتَهْزِءُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَئِنْ

سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوْضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ۭ قُلْ اَبِاللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ
وَرَسُوْلِهٖ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوْا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ
اِيْمَانِكُمْ ۭ اِنْ نَّعْفُ عَنْ طَاۗىِٕفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَاۗىِٕفَةً ۢ بِاَنَّهُمْ
كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And among them there are those who hurt the Prophet and say, "He is just an ear" (hearing and believing everything). Say, "He is a good ear for you who believes in Allah and trusts the believers and is a mercy for those of you who have (truly) believed." And those who hurt the Messenger of Allah, for them there is a painful punishment. [61]

They swear by Allah to you, (O believers) so that they may please you, whereas Allah – as well as His Messenger – has greater right that they should please Him, if they are (true) believers. [62]

Have they not come to know that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger, definite for him is the fire of Jahannam wherein he will remain forever. That is the extreme disgrace. [63]

The hypocrites are afraid that a Sūrah (a chapter of the Holy Qur'ān) may be sent about them which tells them what is there in their hearts. Say, "Go on mocking. Allah is surely to bring out what you are afraid of." [64]

And if you ask them, they will say, "We were just chatting and having fun." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were making fun of?" [65]

Make no excuses. You became disbelievers after you professed Faith. If We forgive some of you, We shall punish some others, because they were guilty. [66]

Commentary

The present verses, like the previous ones, chastise hypocrites for their absurd objections, hostility to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and their feigned professions of Faith on false oaths.

The first verse (61) mentions the painful comment made by the hypocrites against the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. They thought, since

he hears and believes everything, they had nothing to worry about. In the event, their conspiracy was exposed, they would simply tell him on oath that they had nothing to do with it. Allah Almighty corrected them by saying that His Messenger preferred silence against baseless hostilities because of his high morals. He did not believe in what they said. He himself knew reality as it was. He simply avoided refuting them on their faces because of his inherent gentleness of nature.

Announced in verse 64: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُوْنَ (Allah is surely to bring out what you are afraid of) is the news that Allah will expose their conspiracy and mischief. One such event came to pass while returning from the battle of Tabūk when some hypocrites had conspired to kill the Messenger of Allah. Allah Almighty informed him about the plan through angel Jibra'īl helping him to bypass the spot where the hypocrites were sitting in ambush. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Baghawī)

And Sayyidnā 'Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that Allah Ta'ālā had informed the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم about the names of seventy hypocrites complete with their parentage and addresses. But, being the universal mercy, he did not disclose these before his people. (Maẓharī)

Verses 67 – 70

اَلْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ ؕ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ ؕ
اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ
وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوْۤا اَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ
قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرَ اَمْوَالًا وَّاَوْلَادًا ؕ فَاسْتَمْتَعُوْا بِخَلَاقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ
بِخَلَاقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلَاقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ
كَالَّذِيْ خَاضُوْا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ
وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اَلَمْ يَاْتِهِمْ نَبَاُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ۙ وَقَوْمِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاَصْحٰبِ مَدْيَنَ

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتِ ؕ اَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾

The hypocrites, male and female, are all alike. They bid vice and forbid virtue and withhold their hands. They forgot Allah, so He forgot them. Surely, the hypocrites are the sinners. [67]

Allah has promised the fire of Jahannam to the hypocrites, men and women, and to the disbelievers who shall live there forever. It is adequate for them. And Allah has put His curse on them, and for them there is a lasting punishment. [68]

(You are) like those before you. They were stronger than you in power, and richer in wealth and children. So, they enjoyed their share, then you enjoyed your share like those before you enjoyed their share. So, you indulged as they indulged. They are the ones whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the losers. [69]

Has there not reached them the news of those before them, the people of Nūḥ (Noah) and 'Ād and Thamūd and the people of Ibrāhīm and the people of Madyan, and (the news) of the towns overturned? Their messengers came to them with clear signs; so, Allah was not to wrong them, but they have been doing wrong to their own selves. [70]

Commentary

The first verse begins with a profile of the hypocrites. One of the expressions used there: يَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ (and they withhold their hands) has been explained in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as abandonment of Jihād and non-compliance of obligatory rights and duties. Then, the sentence that follows: نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ literally means 'they forgot Allah, so He forgot them.' But, Allah Ta'ālā is free of forgetfulness. So, the sense at this place is: 'those people had abandoned the commandments of Allah, as if they had forgotten it, therefore, Allah too abandoned their prospects of better life in the Hereafter, to the extent that there remained just no trace of any good, or reward, in their name.'

Let us now consider the statement: كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ '(You are) like those before you' in verse 69. According to one exegetical explanation, this is

addressed to hypocrites while according to the other explanation, the address is to Muslims. The addition of 'you are' in parenthesis points out in this direction. Thus, it means that 'you too are like people before you. They went for worldly enjoyments and forgot all about the life to come. The result was that they sank into all sorts of sins. So shall you be.'

Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ narrates a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said that 'you too will take to the ways taken by communities before you. You will imitate them in toto as dittos and clones to the limit that should you see one of them entering into the hole of a lizard (iguana), you will follow him there too.' After having narrated this far, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ said that should anyone wish to ascertain the thematic authenticity of this Ḥadīth, let him read this verse of the Qur'ān: كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ '(You are) like those before you – 69.'

On hearing this, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: مَا أَشْبَهَ اللَّيْلَةَ بِالْبَارِحَةِ that is, 'how similar is this night (in our time) to the last night (way back) – they are the people of Banī Isrā'īl and we have been likened to them.' (Qurṭubī)

The aim of the Ḥadīth is fairly evident. It warns that Muslims too will start following the ways of the Jews and Christians by latter times. This statement appears only after a punishment has been announced for the hypocrites. It serves as an indicator that good Muslims would not do that. Only those among them, who are weak in 'Īmān may do so because they are still infected with the germs of hypocrisy. All good men and women of the Muslim community have been instructed in this verse that they should themselves abstain from such ways as well as help others do the same.

Verses 71 – 73

وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ
وَيُطِيْعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٧١﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ

تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَمَسٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ؕ
وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَالْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۷۲﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا
النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَ بِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۷۳﴾

The believers, male and female, are friends to each other. They bid virtue and forbid vice and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Them Allah will bless with mercy. Surely, Allah is Powerful, Wise. [71]

Allah has promised to the believers, male and female, gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live forever and good homes in gardens of eternity. And Allah's pleasure is the greatest. That is the supreme success. [72]

O Prophet, carry out Jihād against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be strict with them. And their abode is Jahannam, and it is an evil terminus. [73]

Commentary

Previous verses mentioned hypocrites – their conspiracies, hostilities, and the punishment waiting for them. The characteristic style of the Qur'ān required that true believers should also be mentioned at this place giving a view of their life style, rewards and ranks. The verses cited above do just that.

It is interesting that the text, while making a comparison between hypocrites and true believers on this occasion, has this to say: بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ (they are all alike - 67). However, what it has to say about true believers is: بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ (the believers are friends to each other - 71). This releases a hint about the nature of their mutual relationships. Hypocrites base it on functional cooperation between kinsfolk or on self-interest. Such bonds do not last long, nor do they bring the kind of spiritual benefits that are the hallmarks of a heart-to-heart friendship. Juxtaposed against hypocrites there are the true believers. They are sincere friends and wish well of each other. (Qurṭubī)

Moreover, since this friendship and concern for each other is for Al-

lah alone, it is always constant. It remains the same under all conditions, open or secret, present or absent. And it is lasting. This is the mark of a true believer. It is in the very nature of 'Īmān (faith) and Al-*'Amal āṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deed) that they generate mutual love and friendship. The Holy Qur'ān confirms it when it says: سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا (19:96). It means that among those who have believed and taken to consistent good conduct in life, Allah Ta'ālā creates friendship that is deeply rooted into their hearts. What has happened to us in our time? May be we are short on the faith in our hearts and the concern for good in our conduct. That is why mutual relationships among Muslims do not seem to be what the Qur'ān would like them to be. Unfortunately, these are subservient to worldly needs and interests – and are not for the sake of Allah alone, as they should be.

In the last verse (73): جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ (carry out Jihād against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be strict with them), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to wage Jihād against disbelievers and hypocrites both and to be strict in their case. The need to fight against belligerent disbelievers is self-evident. But, the meaning of carrying out Jihād against the hypocrites is explained by the very conduct of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It proves that Jihād against them signifies vocal Jihād through which they should be induced to understand the veracity of Islām, start to feel for it and thus become sincere in their adherence to Islām. (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī) Please bear in mind that the real meaning of the word: غلظ (*ghilaẓ*) used in: واغلظ (and be strict with them) is that one should not show any leniency or grant any concessions in taking a course of action which the person addressed deserves. This word is used as an antonym to رأفة (*ra'fah*) which means mercy and kindheartedness.

In his comments, Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that the use of the word: *ghilẓah* (strictness) at this place means that leniency should not be shown and concessions should not be granted when the injunctions of Sharī'ah are enforced on them. This approach has nothing to do with being vocally strict – because, that is against the favored practice of the blessed prophets. They are never harsh in speech, nor do they curse and swear. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: إِذَازَنَتْ أَمَةُ أَحَدِكُمْ فَلْيَجْلِدْهَا الْحَدَّ وَلَا يُثَرِّبْ عَلَيْهَا (If a bondwoman of anyone among you commits fornication, just enforce the Islāmic legal pun-

ishment for it on her – but, do not denounce her verbally) (Qurṭubī)

Alluding to the persona of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – the image he exuded in his presence before people – Allah Taʻālā has Himself said: وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ (and had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you – 3:159). Then, there is no evidence even from the actual dealings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he ever demonstrated any harsh attitude in conversation or address before disbelievers and hypocrites.

A warning signal

It is certainly a matter of regret that the attitude of harshness in address and conversation was something Islām never took to even against Kuffār, the rigid and hostile disbelievers. But, contemporary Muslims would not bat an eye and use it against other Muslims – not to say much about many of those who would congratulate themselves for having done this as some service to their religion. *Innalillāh* ...

Verses 74 – 78

يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ مَا قَالُوْا ؕ وَلَقَدْ قَالُوْا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ
اِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا ۚ وَمَا نَقَمُوْٓا اِلَّآ اَنْ اَغْنٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ
وَرَسُوْلُهٗ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّتُوْبُوْا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّتَوَلَّوْا
يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِى
الْاَرْضِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ
لَئِنْ اٰتٰىنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾
فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾
فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ بِمَآ اَخْلَفُوا اللّٰهَ مَا
وَعَدُوْهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ
سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوٰىهُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿٧٨﴾

They swear by Allah that they said nothing while, indeed, they had said the word of infidelity and had disbelieved after having accepted Islām, and had intended what they could not achieve. And they showed resent-

ment against nothing but that Allah and His Messenger have made them rich with His grace. So, if they repent, it will be good for them, and if they turn away, Allah shall punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is neither a friend on the Earth, nor a helper. [74]

And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah: "If He gives us (wealth) out of His grace, then, surely we shall give alms and shall be among the righteous." [75]

But when He gave them (wealth) of His grace, they became stingy about it, and went back turning their faces away. [76]

So Allah, in turn, put hypocrisy in their hearts till the day they shall meet Him, because they broke their promise with Allah and because they have been telling lies. [77] **Did they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they whisper and that Allah is the well-aware of all the unseen.** [78]

Commentary

In the first verse: يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ (They swear by Allah –74), the text reverts to the hypocrites who keep uttering words of infidelity in their gatherings but, should Muslims come to know about that, they would promptly declare on oath that they had nothing to do with it. Giving the background in which this verse was revealed, Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave an address on the occasion of the battle of Tabūk. He talked about the sorry state of affairs the hypocrites were in and warned them of their sad end. Also present there was Jullās, a hypocrite. When he returned to his people, he said 'if whatever Muḥammad says is true, then, we are worse than donkeys.' By chance, a Ṣaḥābī whose name was 'Āmir ibn Qays heard the comment. He told him that 'there is no doubt about what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said for it is true and you are really worse than donkeys.'

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned to Madīnah back from his trip to Tabūk, 'Āmir ibn Qays told him about this event. But, Jullās flatly disowned what he had said. On top of that, he charged 'Āmir ibn Qays of having accused him falsely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered both of them to stand close to the *Mimbar* of the *Nabiyy*

(the stepped platform used to deliver *khuṭbah* in the *masjid* originally occupied by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and traditionally regarded as a symbol of his message) and take an oath. Jullās was quick to take a false oath to the effect that he never said that and that 'Āmir was lying. When it was 'Āmir's turn, he took his oath. Then, he raised his hands of prayer before Allah saying, 'O Allah, let Your Messenger know about the reality of this matter through a revelation to him.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said *'Āmīn* (amen) following his prayer and so did all Muslims present there. These people had yet to move from there when came Angel Jibra'īl with the revelation which included this verse.

When Jullās heard this verse, he stood up immediately and started saying, *'yā rasūlallāh*, now I confess that I was the one in the wrong and that which was said by 'Āmir was the truth. But, this very verse has also given me the right of making Taubah (repentance). Hence, I seek forgiveness from Allah and repent for what I did earlier.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted his Taubah after which he stayed firm in it and things turned towards the better in his life. (Maẓharī)

Some commentators have referred to similar events as the background of the revelation of this verse – especially as this verse includes the sentence: وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا (and had intended what they could not achieve –74). This sentence seems to suggest that the verse is connected with some event when the hypocrites had hatched some conspiracy against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Muslim followers in which they could not succeed. For example, there is a fairly well known incident that came to pass during the return from this very battle of Tabūk. Twelve men from among the hypocrites sat in ambush behind a mountain pass with the intention of taking the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by surprise and kill him. Angel Jibra'īl informed him of their intention. He took a different route and their conspiracy went to dust.

For that matter, several other events of this nature are also on record. But, there is no element of contradiction or improbability in the likelihood that all those events are being referred to through this verse.

The second verse: وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ (And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah - 75) is also connected with a particular

event which has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh, Al-Ṭabarānī and Al-Baihaqī on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī رضی اللہ عنہ. According to this report, a person called Tha'labah ibn Ḥāṭib al-Anṣārī presented himself before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and requested him to pray that he becomes rich. He said, 'Is it that you do not like my way? By the Being that holds my life in his His hands, if I had wished, mountains of Madīnah would have turned into solid gold following behind me on my walkways. But, I do not like being that wealthy.' The man went away. But, he returned later and repeated his request for the same prayer with the pledge that, should he get the wealth prayed for, he would give every deserving person his share from it. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم made the prayer. The effect of the prayer showed up in an unprecedented increase in the number of goats he owned. When the number increased further, the space in Madīnah became too small for him. So, he moved out into the outskirts from where he used to come to Madīnah where he offered the Ṣalāh of Ẓuhr and 'Aṣr with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. As for the rest of the prayers, he used to perform these in the wilderness where his herd of goats, his prized possession, was located.

Then, this very flock of goats became so large that even that area on the outskirts became insufficient. He moved farther away from Madīnah coming there only on Fridays for the Jumu'ah Ṣalāh. As for the five daily prayers, he did them where he was stationed. Then came further increases in his wealth and he had to leave that spot too, only to go far away from Madīnah where he sat deprived of his Jumu'ah and Jama'ah both.

After the passage of some time, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم asked people about him. They told him that his 'wealth' had increased to such proportions that he had to go far away from Madīnah and that is why he is not seen in the city. On hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: وَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَةَ (Alas for Tha'labah) three times.

By chance, it was the time when came the revelation of the verse of Ṣadaqāt (60) where the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been commanded to collect Ṣadaqāt from Muslims – (خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً). He had the whole law of Ṣadaqāt committed to writing, appointed two persons as the collectors of Ṣadaqah and sent them to collect the Ṣadaqāt due on live-

stock owned by Muslims. They were ordered to go to Tha'labah ibn Ḥāṭib as well, and to another person from the tribe of Banī Sulaym also.

When the two collectors reached Tha'labah and presented the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he said that this thing had become a sort of Jizyah which is taken from non-Muslims. Then he hedged and asked them to leave on that occasion, however, they could call on him on their way back. The two of them left.

Something different happened in the case of the other person from the tribe of Banī Sulaym. When he heard about the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he himself called on the two emissaries of his master carrying with him the best from out of his livestock of camels and goats, precisely according to his Zakatable *niṣāb* of Ṣadaqah. They told him that they have orders not to pick out the best among animals, in fact, they were supposed to take the average ones, therefore, they could not take these. The man from Banī Sulaym insisted that it was his pleasure to present those very animals and requested that they be accepted as they were.

After that, when these two emissaries had completed their circuit of Ṣadaqah collection, they returned to Tha'labah. He told them that he wanted to see that Law of Ṣadaqah they were talking about. He looked at it and said no more than what he had said earlier – 'this thing has become a sort of Jizyah that should not be taken from Muslims.' 'All right,' he said, 'you can go for now. I have to think about it first. I will decide later.'

When these two gentlemen reached Madīnah, they went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. At that time he, before hearing their report on the mission, repeated the words he had said earlier: يَا وَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَة يَاوَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَة يَا وَيْحَ ثَعْلَبَة (Alas for Tha'labah). He said it three times. After that, he was pleased to hear about the Sulaymī deal and prayed for him. Thereupon, came the verse: وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ (And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah – 75). It means: 'if Allah gave them wealth, they would give out alms and charities and fulfill the rights of all deserving people, the relatives and the poor, as done by the righteous people of the community. But, when Allah blessed them with wealth, out of His grace, they became misers overnight and turned away from their pledge of obedience to Allah and His Messenger.'

Verse 77: فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ (So Allah, in turn, put hypocrisy in their hearts) points out to its cause which lies in their lying and pledge breaking. As a consequence, Allah made the hypocrisy of their hearts become deep and firm. Now, they would just not have the ability to make Taubah itself.

A serious note of warning

From here we learn that there are occasions when the curse of evil deeds assumes alarming proportions, so much so that one is deprived of the very ability (*taufīq*) of making Taubah. May Allah protect us from this misfortune!

Let us now go back to the detailed narrative of Sayyidnā Abū Umamah رضی اللہ عنہ mentioned a little earlier. Ibn Jarīr writes at the end of it: When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said 'Alas for Tha'labah' three times, some of his relatives were present in the gathering. When they heard it, one of them immediately traveled to see Tha'labah. When he reached there, he reproached him for his behavior while informing him that it has caused the revelation of a particular verse of the Qur'ān. This made Tha'labah nervous. He reached Madīnah and requested the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that his Ṣadaqah may be accepted. He said that Allah Ta'ālā had told him not to accept his Ṣadaqah. Hearing this, Tha'labah went crazy with disappointment and literally started throwing dust on his head.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'this is something you have chosen to do on your own. I ordered you and you did not obey. Now, your Ṣadaqah cannot be accepted.' Tha'labah returned disappointed. Then, some days later, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم departed from this mortal world and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ became the Khalīfah. Tha'labah came to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ and requested that he should accept his Ṣadaqah. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم did not accept it, how can I do it?'

Then, after the demise of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, Tha'labah came to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ. He made the same request and got the same answer from him, as was given by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ. Again, he submitted this request to Sayyidnā Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ during his period of Khilāfah. He too refused it. It was during the tenure of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ that Tha'labah died. We seek the protection of Allah from all evil deeds. (Maẓharī)

A question and its answer

When Tha'labah had submitted in repentance, the question is why was his Taubah not accepted? The reason is evident. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed through revelation that he was not making his Taubah with absolute sincerity. He had hypocrisy concealed in his heart. He was simply trying to deceive Muslims for the time being only to put matters right between them. Therefore, it was not acceptable. And when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself declared him to be a hypocrite, the Khulafa' who succeeded him were left with no right to accept his Ṣadaqah – because, being a Muslim is a condition for Zakah. Now, after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no one knows the hypocrisy hidden in the heart of a person, therefore, the rule to follow in future is: Anyone who makes Taubah and confesses to his Islam and 'Iman should be treated as Muslims are treated – no matter what lies in his heart. (Bayan al-Qur'an)

Verses 79 – 80

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَلْمِزُوْنَ الْمُطَّوِّعِيْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ وَ الَّذِيْنَ
لَا يَجِدُوْنَ اِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنْهُمْ ؕ سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمْ ۫ وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۷۹﴾ اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنْ
تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ
كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾

Those who find fault with believers who voluntarily give alms and have nothing but their hard earnings – still they mock at them – mocked they are by Allah and for them there is a painful punishment. [79]

Ask pardon for them or do not ask pardon for them – even if you ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah shall never pardon them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path. [80]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first verse (79) are taunts thrown at Muslims who gave away in charity on a voluntary basis (*Naflī Ṣadaqāt*). It appears

in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā Abū Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه said: 'we had orders from Allah Ta'ālā that we must give Ṣadaqah and, believe it, we used to do manual labor for that (that is, we had no money or thing with us. We used to take out that Ṣadaqah too from whatever we earned through this very manual labor). Thus, Abū 'Aqīl offered Ṣadaqah to the measure of 0.5 *Ṣā'* (approximately 1.75 kilos). Then, someone came and gave a little more than that. The hypocrites mocked at them for having brought something so insignificant in the name of Ṣadaqah. Allah never needs things like that. And whoever gave a little more in Ṣadaqah, they accused him that he had done it to show off before people. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Please note that, in the sentence: سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمْ (mocked they are by Allah - 79), the word 'mocked' stands for 'punished for their mockery'.

In the second verse (80), there is a statement about the hypocrites. It has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم. He has been told whether or not he seeks forgiveness for them makes no difference – and no matter how many times he seeks forgiveness for them, they shall not be forgiven. A detailed explanation of this appears under the comments on verse 84: لَا تُصَلِّ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ (and never offer a prayer on any one of them who dies) appearing a little later.

Verses 81 – 83

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلٰفَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَكَرِهُوْٓا اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا
بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَالُوْا لَا تَنْفِرُوْا فِي الْحَرِّ ؕ
قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا ؕ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ فَلْيَضْحَكُوْا
قَلِيْلًا وَّلْيَبْكُوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ فَاِنْ
رَّجَعَكَ اللّٰهُ اِلٰى طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِلْخُرُوْجِ فَقُلْ لَّنْ
تَخْرُجُوْا مَعِيَ اَبَدًا وَّلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوْا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا ؕ اِنَّكُمْ رَضِيْتُمْ
بِالْقُعُوْدِ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْخٰلِفِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾

Those who were left behind were happy with their sitting back to the displeasure of the Messenger of Allah, and they disliked to carry out *jihād* in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives, and they said, "Do not

march in this hot weather." Say, "The fire of Jahannam is more intense in heat," only if they could understand. [81]

So, let them laugh a little, and weep a lot, being a reward of what they used to earn. [82]

Then, if Allah brings you back to a group of them and they seek your permission to march, say to them, "You shall never march with me ever after, and shall never fight an enemy in my company. You were happy with sitting back the first time; now, sit with those remaining behind." [83]

Commentary

Behavior patterns of hypocrites who did not take part in the battle of Tabūk, despite the general call of Jihād, continue to be the main theme since several previous verses.

The current verses give another example of their behavior. Then, it was said that they will be punished in the Hereafter, their names will be eliminated from the list of the *mujāhidīn* of Islām forever in this mortal world and that they will never be allowed to take part in any future Jihād.

The word: مُخَلَّفُوْنَ (those who were left behind – 81) is the plural of مُخَلَّف (*mukhallaf*) which means 'abandoned' or left out. The subtle hint thus released is that these people are pleased with the idea that they have stayed away from endangering their lives by not participating in the Jihād. But, the truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā did not consider them to be worthy of this supreme honor. Therefore, it is not they who have abandoned the Jihād, in fact, it is Jihād that has abandoned them. The reason is that Allah and His Messenger have, at their discretion, considered it fit that they should be left out.

Following immediately, there is the word: خلاف (*khilāf*) in: خِلٰفَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ translated as 'to the displeasure of the Messenger of Allah.' This word could be taken in the sense of 'behind' or 'after' as well. In fact, this is the meaning Abū 'Ubayd has gone by. If so, it would mean that these people were rejoicing in their staying (at home) after (the departure of) the Messenger of Allah – an occasion not really worth the mirth. As for the word: بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ (*bimaq'adihim*: their sitting back) in the same verse, it appears here in the sense of قعود (*qu'ūd*: sitting) as a verbal noun.

It is also possible to take the word *khilāf* in the sense of *mukhālafat* (contravention, opposition). In that case, it would mean that they sat home in contravention of the command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, they did not leave it at that. They prompted others too by saying that they should not march in that hot weather: (لَا تَنْفِرُوْا فِي الْحَرِّ).

We already know that the command to fight the battle of Tabūk was given at a time when the heat was intense. The rejoinder to their comment came from Allah Ta'ālā: قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا (Say: [O Prophet] the fire of Jahannam is more intense in heat) that is, these people are really unfortunate. They see the heat of a certain given time and try to beat it one way or the other. But, they do not realize that their disobedience to the command of Allah and His Messenger would bring them face to face with the fire of Jahannam. Why would they not worry about it? Is it that the heat of our seasons is more intense than the heat of Hell?

After that it was said: فَلْيَضْحَكُوْا قَلِيْلًا (So, let them laugh a little, and weep a lot, being a reward of what they used to earn – 82). Though, the word *'falyaḍḥakū'* (So, laugh) has been used in the imperative form, but commentators interpret it in the sense of the predicate of a nominal clause. The wisdom behind the use of the imperative form given by them is that this is categorical and certain. In other words, this is going to happen as a matter of certainty. Such people could laugh for the days they have in the mortal world - but, in 'Ākhirah, they must weep and weep forever.

Commentator Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports the explanation of this verse from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه as follows:

اَلدُّنْيَا قَلِيْلٌ فَلْيَضْحَكُوْا فِيْهَا مَاشَآءُوْا فَاِذَا انْقَطَعَتِ الدُّنْيَا وَصَارُوْآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ
فَلْيَسْتَأْنِفُوا الْبُكَاءَ بُكَاءً لَا يَنْقَطِعُ اَبَدًا

> The *dunyā* (present world) is short-lived. So, let them laugh therein as they wish but when *'dunyā'* will come to an end and they will start coming to Allah, then, they will start weeping, a weeping which will never come to an end. (Maẓharī)

The statement: لَنْ تَخْرُجُوْا (*lan takhrujū* ... you shall never march) in the second verse (83) has been explained by Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in the summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān. According to him, 'even if these people intend to participate in a future Jihād, they

would get out of it when they want to, under one or the other pretext; and since they do not have faith in their heart, their intention too will not be backed by sincerity. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was commanded that, even if they want to take part in a Jihād, he should tell them the truth that he does not trust their word and deed. So, they would neither go for Jihād nor fight an enemy of Islām in his company.'

Most of the commentators have said that this injunction has been enforced as their punishment in the present world, that is, even if they themselves were to make a request that they be allowed to take part in Jihād, even then, they should not be allowed to do that.

Verse 84

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰٓ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّاتَ اَبَدًا وَّلَا تَقُمْ عَلٰى قَبْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And never offer a prayer on any one of them who dies, and do not stand by his grave. They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died while they were sinners. [84]

Commentary

It stands established from Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth, and confirmed by a consensus of the Muslim Ummah on it that this verse was revealed at the time of the death of the hypocrite, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy, and about the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. Then, it also stands established from the report in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم offered Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. After he had done it, this verse was revealed. And thereafter, he never offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq* (hypocrite).

The background in which this verse was revealed appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. According to this report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه, when 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy ibn Salūl died, his son 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He was a sincere Muslim, and a Ṣaḥābī. When he requested for his shirt so that he could use it as a shroud for the dead body of his father, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let him have it. Then, he requested him to also lead the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for his father. He accepted and rose to do

that. At that point, Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه held the fall of his shirt cloth and said: 'you are going to lead the Janāzah Ṣalāh for this *munāfiq* although Allah Ta'ālā has prohibited you from doing that.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has given me a choice. I may pray for their forgiveness, or I may not – and as for forgiveness not to be granted even if prayed for it seventy times as in the verse, I can say that I can do that more than seventy times.' The verse referred to here is verse 80 of Sūrah Al-Taubah which you have gone through a little earlier. For your convenience, its words are: اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرْلَهُمْ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْلَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَاللّٰهُ لَهُمْ (Ask pardon for them or do not ask pardon for them; even if you ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah shall never pardon them). Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. Soon after the Ṣalāh, this verse: لَاتُصَلِّ عَلٰى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ (And never offer a prayer on any one of them...) was revealed (so, after that, he never led the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq*).

Removal of ambiguities concerning this event

A question arises here about 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy, a *munāfiq* whose hypocrisy was laid bare on many different occasions and who was regarded as ring leader of all hypocrites. How was it that he received such unusual treatment from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he gave his blessed shirt to be used as his funeral shroud?

In answer, two reasons can be given for it. Firstly, it was done on the request of his son who was a sincere Ṣaḥābī and the motive was simply to console him on his loss. There could be a second reason as well. This has been reported in Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه. When some Quraysh chiefs were arrested on the occasion of the battle of Badr, one of them happened to be 'Abbās, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he saw that his uncle does not have a shirt on his body, he asked his Companions to put a shirt on him. Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه was tall. No shirt other than that of 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy would fit him. So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took the shirt from 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy and had his uncle 'Abbās wear it. It was only to repay this favor that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had given his shirt for him. (Qurṭubī)

The second question relates to what Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه had said to the Holy Prophet. It will be recalled that he had said, 'Allah Ta'ālā has prohibited you from leading the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for a hypo-

crite.' We have to look for the basis on which he said that, because no verse had ever prohibited the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم expressly from offering the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for a hypocrite. From here it becomes fairly clear that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ must have deduced that sense of prohibition from this very verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah referred earlier, that is, إِسْتَغْفِرْلَهُمْ (Ask pardon for them...80). Now the question is, if this verse of prohibition refers to the Ṣalāh of Janāzah, why would the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم not let this be regarded as prohibited, instead of which, he said that the choice in the verse had been given to him?

The answer is that, in reality, the formal arrangement of words in the verse does carry the sense of giving a choice – and it is also obvious that the mention of seventy times at this place is not for prescribing a limit. It is, rather, to express the sense of many times. Thus, the outcome of the verse, in terms of its obvious sense, turns out to be that 'a hypocrite will not be pardoned, no matter how many times you were to seek forgiveness for him.' But, he has not been expressly prohibited from praying for their forgiveness as such. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān from Sūrah Yā Sīn is a parallel example. There it has been said: سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (And it is all the same for them whether or not you warn them – they are not going to believe – 36:10). This verse has not categorically stopped him from warning people of evils and inviting them to what is good. For that matter, some other verses of the Qur'ān also prove that the ongoing mission of calling people towards the faith never stopped. Of course, it included such people as well – for example, بَلِّغْ مَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (O Messenger, convey all that has been sent down to you from your Lord. – 5:67) and إِنَّمَآ أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (you are only a warner, and for every people, there is a guide – 13:7). The outcome is that the verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn (36:10) quoted above proved that choice was given to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, though in a limited frame of reference. Then, the later verses quoted immediately earlier provided the standing proof of the continuance of the mission of warning people against evils. From the verse under study too, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had gathered that they will not be pardoned, but the situation was that he had not been restrained from seeking forgiveness for them through some other verse either, till then.

Then, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم also knew that neither his

shirt nor the Ṣalāh of Janāzah he offered for the deceased hypocrite were to bring forgiveness for him. But, he did hope that his action would yield benefits for other aspects of Islāmic public policy. People of his family and the disbelieving people in general were bound to observe the way the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم deals with their leader. This was likely to bring them closer to Islām, even embracing it. As for some clear prohibition of offering the Ṣalāh of Janāzah, it just did not exist until that time. Therefore, he led the Ṣalāh.

Perhaps, the other answer lies in the sentence that has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. There, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been quoted to have said: 'Had I known that he will be pardoned by praying for his forgiveness more than seventy times, I would have done that too.' (Qurṭubī)

The second evidence comes from another Ḥadīth in which the following words from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have been reported: 'my shirt cannot save him from the punishment of Allah. But, I did it in the hope that on the basis of this action thousands of his people will embrace Islām.' So, according to what was said, after having witnessed this event, one thousand people from the tribe of Khazraj embraced Islām (as reported in the books of *maghāzi* and in some books of Tafsīr).

Summary

To sum up, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم knew from previous verses that no matter what they do, the *munāfiqs* (the hypocrites) will not be pardoned. But, there were some factors that explain the rationale of his action. The words of the verse seemed to have given him the choice. No other verse had yet prohibited him from doing so. Then, there was the opportunity to pay back the favor of a disbeliever here in this world. Last, but not the least, was the hope of other disbelievers embracing Islām as a result of this action. Therefore, he preferred to lead the Ṣalāh of Janāzah. As for the action of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه, he thought that once it stands proved through the verse in question that a hypocrite will not be pardoned, he found no reason for offering a Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him and praying that he may be forgiven. According to him, it might be redundant, and against the station of a prophet. Therefore, he deemed it prohibited to offer the *janazah*. The posi-

tion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he did not, though, consider this action as beneficial in its own right – but, he did have the likelihood of others embracing Islām in sight. Therefore, this action did not remain futile. To conclude, in this manner, no ambiguity remains either in the conduct of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or in the words of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Now, came the verse: لَاتُصَلِّ (and never offer a prayer) revealed in clear terms. It was realized that, no doubt, there was a religiously expedient advantage visible to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in offering the Ṣalāh but it also carried a disturbing factor in it, almost the reverse of what was expected to be expedient. This element somehow did not attract the attention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The likelihood of this action creating dissatisfaction among sincere Muslims was strong. They may have thought that sincere Muslims and wily hypocrites have been equated officially. To offset this danger, this particular prohibition was revealed in the Qur'ān – and after that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ never offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq*.

Rulings

1. This verse tells us that offering Ṣalāh on the Janāzah of a *kāfir* or the making of Du'ā seeking his or her forgiveness is not permissible.

2. This verse also proves that to stand before the grave of a *kāfir* as a mark of respect for him, or to go to visit it, is *ḥarām*. Should this be to learn some lesson therefrom, or because of some compulsion, then, it is not contrary to this. For example, it appears in Hidāyah that, should a *kāfir* relative of a Muslim die without leaving a guardian or heir behind, the Muslim relative can put the deceased into hollowed ground as is, without having to make it conform to the standard practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 85 – 89

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا أُنْزِلَتْ
سُوْرَةٌ أَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوْا مَعَ رَسُوْلِهِ اسْتَاْذَنَكَ أُولُوا
الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوْا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَّعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ رَضُوْا بِأَنْ

يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾
لٰكِنِ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ جٰهَدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ
وَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرٰتُ ۫ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ
جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۸۹﴾

And their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah only wants to punish them with these in this world and that their souls depart while they are disbelievers. [85]

And when a Sūrah is revealed (saying), "Believe in Allah and carry out *jihād* in the company of His Messenger" the capable ones from them seek your permission and say, "Let us remain with those sitting back." [86]

They are happy to be with women who sit back, and their hearts are sealed; so they do not understand. [87]

But the Messenger and the believers in his company have carried out *jihād* with their wealth and lives, and for them there are the good things, and they are the successful. [88] **Allah has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow where they will live forever. That is the supreme success.** [89]

Commentary

Once again, the present verses carry the description of hypocrites who had avoided participating in the battle of Tabūk under one or the other pretext. Among such hypocrites, there were some rich people as well. Their affluent life could have made Muslims ask, 'when these people are so unacceptable with Allah, why did they have to get all those blessings in this world?'

In response, it was said that a little thinking would unfold the reality behind what they possess in the form of wealth and children. These are no mercy and blessing for them. Instead, these are their trial and punishment in this world – not to say much about the additional punishment due in the Hereafter. It is not difficult to understand the reason. They love wealth, guard it and keep worrying as to how they can go on increasing it. They are never at peace. They collect things of

comfort around them but genuine peace and comfort never knock at their doors, for they are things of the heart. And since this engrossment in the pursuit of wealth makes them heedless towards the concerns of the Hereafter, they indulge in acts of disobedience to their Creator that in turn becomes the cause of their punishment. So, whether a cause or its effect, it remains a punishment. This is the reason why the Qur'ān has used the words: لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا (to punish them with these) in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā wants to punish them by and through these very possessions.

The expression: أُولُوا الطَّوْلِ (*ulu 'aṭ-ṭaul*: translated as 'the capable ones') (86) is not for particularization. Instead, it serves a purpose. It tells that there were others too, the ones not so capable. And the incapable ones had, at least, some obvious excuse to stay behind.

Verse 90

وَجَآءَ الْمُعَذِّرُوْنَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوا
اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۚ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۰﴾

And the excuse-makers from the Bedouins came that they might be allowed (to stay behind), while those who were false to Allah and His Messengers (just) stayed behind. A painful punishment is about to fall upon those of them who disbelieve. [90]

Commentary

The details given in the verse tell us that there were two kinds of people among the Bedouins of the desert. First, there were those who visited the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and requested that they might be excused from Jihād and allowed to stay behind. Then, there were the arrogant and rebellious among them who did not even bother to take the trouble of excusing themselves out of it. They just stayed behind.

'When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم allowed Jadd ibn Qays that he may not go on Jihād,' says Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh,رضی اللہ عنہ 'some hypocrites also came to him, offered their excuses and sought his permission to stay out of Jihād. As for the permission, he let them have it, but he did realize that they were making false excuses, therefore, he turned away from them. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.'

It made it clear that their excuse was unacceptable. Therefore, they were served with the warning of a painful punishment. However, by saying: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ (those of them who disbelieve), a hint was given that the excuse given by some of them was not because of their disbelief or hypocrisy, rather, it was because of their natural laziness. So, they were not to be affected by the punishment to fall upon those disbelievers.

Verses 91 – 93

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَآءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ
لَا يَجِدُوْنَ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ حَرَجٌ اِذَا نَصَحُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ مَا عَلَى
الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩١﴾ وَّلَا عَلَى
الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا مَآ اَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَآ اَجِدُ مَآ اَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۠
تَوَلَّوْا وَّ اَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا اَلَّا يَجِدُوْا مَا
يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ وَهُمْ
اَغْنِيَآءُ ۚ رَضُوْا بِاَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ ۙ وَطَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى
قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾

There is no blame on the weak, or on the sick, or on those who have nothing to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is no way against those good in deeds. And Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [91]

Nor (is there any blame) on those who – when they came to you so that you might provide them with a carrier and you said (to them), "I find no carrier to give to you" – went back, their eyes flowing with tears grieving that they had nothing to spend. [92]

Blame lies, in fact, on those who ask you permission despite being rich. They are happy being with women who sit back. And Allah has sealed their hearts; so they do not know. [93]

Commentary

Previous verses mentioned people who were not really excusable from participation in Jihād but sat it out because of laziness. Then, there were hypocrites who had taken permission from the Holy Proph-

et صلى الله عليه وسلم under false pretexts because of their disbelief and hypocrisy. And then there were the arrogant ones who did not bother about excuses and permissions and just sat back. They were told there that they were not excusable and that there was a painful punishment waiting for those of them who practiced disbelief and hypocrisy.

The present verses mention sincere Muslims who were deprived of participation in Jihād because they were genuinely incapable of doing so. Some of them were blind, or sick, or handicapped. Their excuse was all too evident. Then, there were some of those who were ready to take part in Jihād, in fact, were 'dying' to go into the Jihād, but they could not make the trip because they did not have an animal to ride on. The journey was long and the weather was very hot. They told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم how eager they were to participate in the Jihād but how unfortunate that they had nothing to ride on. They requested him to see if they could have some mounts.

There are many events of this nature recorded in books of Exegesis and History. So, different things happened. To some of them who came initially, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had no choice but to say that they had no arrangements to provide mounts to warriors. But, these people returned from him weeping and when they kept weeping in despair, Allah Ta'ālā took care of them in His own way. Six camels arrived before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم right at that time. He let them have these. (Maẓharī) Then, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه arranged mounts for three of them, although he had already made similar arrangements for many more of them earlier.

Ultimately, there were some of them still left out for the simple reason that they could not find a mount. Rendered totally helpless, they could do nothing about their aspirations for Jihād. These are the kinds of people mentioned in the cited verses whose excuse was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. However, at the end, the warning was repeated by saying that particularly cursed are those who, despite their ability, elected to stay away from Jihād like women. The sentence: إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ (Blame lies, in fact, on those who ask your permission despite being rich - 93) means exactly this.

Verses 94 – 96

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ قُلْ لَّا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ

لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّأَنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ ۚ وَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ
ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ
لِتُعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ ۖ فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ ۖ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا
عَنْهُمْ ۖ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ
الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

They will make excuses to you when you return to them. Say, "Do not make excuses. We shall never believe you. Allah has told us the facts about you. And Allah will see what you do, and His Messenger as well. Then you shall be returned to the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, and He will tell you what you have been doing." [94]

They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeed. So, you ignore them. They are filth, and their abode is Jahannam, as a recompense for what they used to do. [95]

They swear before you so that you may be pleased with them. So, even if you are pleased with them, Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people. [96]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were hypocrites who came up with false excuses at the time Jihād forces were getting ready to march out and succeeded in being allowed to stay behind. The present verses mention those who visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his return from Jihād and offered false excuses for their absence from it. These verses had been revealed before his return to Madīnah and had told him beforehand about the forthcoming event, that is, the hypocrites will come to him as soon as he reaches Madīnah and will offer their excuses. And so it happened.

Three instructions about them have been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the verses cited above. These are as follows:

1. When they come to make excuses, they should be told that they

do not have to make false excuses for they were not going to be believed in their word. Allah Ta'ālā had already told the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the condition of their thinking and doing including the details of their wicked plans and secret intentions. This was enough to prove that they were liars, therefore, offering excuses makes no sense. After that, it was said: وَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ (And Allah will see what you do...). Here, respite has been given to them so that they could still make their Taubah (repentance), renounce Nifāq (hypocrisy) and become true Muslims – because, the wording of the text stipulates that Allah and His Messenger shall see what they do and how they do it. In other words, action shall be taken in consonance with their behavior pattern. If they repented sincerely and became true Muslims, their sins shall stand forgiven. Otherwise, these false excuses were not going to do them any good.

2. The second instruction to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appears in the second verse (95) where it has been said that these people will come to him after his return to Madīnah, impress him with their feigned oaths and try to satisfy him. What they would wish to achieve from this initiative is: لِتُعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ (so that you may ignore their misdeed), that is, 'ignore their absence from Jihād and spare the reproach due on it.' Thereupon, it was said that he might as well grant their wish. The text says: فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ:'you ignore them.' Thus, the instruction carries the sense: 'neither reproach and admonish, nor deal with pleasantly' – because, reproach usually brings no good. When they have no faith in their heart – and they do not want to have it either – what would come out of reproach? So, why waste good time!

3. The third instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appears in the third verse (96): "They swear before you so that you may be pleased with them." The order of Allah Ta'ālā is that their wish was not to be granted and he was not to be pleased with them. However, it was also said that, 'even if you were to be pleased with them, it was not going to work for them in any manner, because Allah is not pleased with them. And how could Allah be pleased with them when they are still adamant about their denial and hypocrisy?

Verses 97 – 99

اَلْاَعْرَابُ اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّنِفَاقًا وَّاَجْدَرُ اَلَّا يَعْلَمُوْا حُدُوْدَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ

اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۹۷﴾ وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ
يَّتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَّيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ
السَّوْءِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۸﴾ وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ
بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرُبٰتٍ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَصَلَوٰتِ
الرَّسُوْلِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۹۹﴾

The Bedouins are often more strict in disbelief and hypocrisy and are most likely to be ignorant of the limits of what Allah has sent down to His Messenger. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [97]

And among the Bedouins there are those who take what they spend as a penalty and they look forward to the cycles of time to turn against you. Upon those is the evil cycle. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [98]

And among the Bedouins there are others who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and take what they spend as a source of nearness to Allah and of prayers from the Messenger. It is indeed a source of nearness for them. Allah will admit them to His mercy. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [99]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses were the hypocrites of Madīnah. The present verses mention hypocrites who lived on the desert around the outskirts of Madīnah.

The word الاعراب (*al-a'rāb*) is not a plural form of العرب (*al-'arab*). It is اسم جمع (*ism al-jam'*: collective noun) and is used for the Bedouins of the desert. In its singular form, it becomes الاعرابى (*al-a'rābiyy*) – similar to (*al-anṣāriyy*), the singular form of الانصار (*al-anṣār*).

According to their condition described in verse 97, they outdid city dwellers in disbelief and hypocrisy. The reason given is that these people generally remained ignorant and hard-hearted as they lived far away from knowledge and the knowledgeable. Then the text says: 'the Bedouins are more likely to be ignorant of the limits of what Allah has sent down.' It means that the very surroundings in which they live are such as would keep them in the dark about the limits set by Allah

through the revelation – because the Qur'ān does not come before them, nor do they have access to its meanings, explanations and injunctions.

In the second verse (98) too, yet another aspect of the condition of these very Bedouins has been described as: 'those who take what they spend (in Zakāh etc.) as a penalty.' Why would they do so? The reason is that they hardly have any faith in their heart. When it comes to making Ṣalāh, they would, though, do that, but just to camouflage their disbelief. They would even fulfill the obligation of Zakāh, but their hearts would keep worrying as to why they had to put good money down the drain. Therefore, they always look forward to the time when Muslims are hit by some calamity or defeat that may possibly deliver them from having to pay this penalty. The word: الدوائر (*al-dawā'ir*: the cycles of time) is the plural of: دائرة (*dā'irah*). According to the Arabic lexicon, *dā'irah* is the changed state that shifts away from the good state into a bad one. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān says in response to them: عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ (upon them is the evil cycle). In other words, the evil state of affairs they wish would strike at Muslims is going to descend upon them all right – and, because their words and deeds are such, they will find themselves far more disgraced.

After having described the state of affairs prevailing among hypocrites of distant deserts, it was considered appropriate that the true and staunch Muslims from among the same stock of Bedouins should also be mentioned. This was done in verse 99 – very much in line with the typical style of the Qur'ān – so that, it stands established that Bedouins too are not all alike. Among them, there are many sincere Muslims, and people of sense and discernment as well. Their style of life is different. When they give in obligatory alms (Zakāh) or in voluntary charities (Ṣadaqāt), they regard these as a source of nearness to Allah Ta'ālā and hope that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would be praying for them.

That Ṣadaqāt are a source of nearness to Allah Ta'ālā is obvious. However, the hope of prayers from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on a different basis. It should be borne in mind that the Holy Qur'ān – wherever it has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to collect Zakāh on the wealth and property of Muslims – has also directed him that he should also pray for those who pay Zakāh. The forthcoming verse (103):

خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] through which you may cleanse and purify them, and pray for them) is a good example? The instruction to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that he should pray for these people has been termed: وصل علیهم (and pray for them) using the word: صلوة (*ṣalāt*) for it. Therefore, in the present verse as well, the sense of the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been expressed by the use of the word: صلوة (*ṣalāt*).

Verse 100

وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِاِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

As for the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live for ever. That is the supreme success. [100]

Commentary

The verse before this (99) carried a description of sincere and true Muslims among the Bedouins of the desert. The present verse mentions all sincere and true Muslims along with their relative degrees of excellence.

Let us begin with the opening statement: اَلسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ (the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters). Most commentators have taken the preposition من (*min*) for *tab'īḍ* which denotes a part of something and may be translated as 'out of') and thus have set up two categories of the noble Ṣaḥābah from among the Emigrants (*al-muhājirīn*) and the Supporters (*al-anṣār*) – (1) 'the first and foremost,' then, (2) the rest of them.

This interpretation implies that it is only first category that is referred to in the above verse, i.e. 'the first and foremost'. Then, for identifying 'the first and foremost' the commentators have different views. Some consider 'the first and foremost' from among the noble Companions to be those who have offered their Ṣalāh by turning to.both the Qiblahs, that is, those who had embraced Islām before the change of Qi-

blah were 'the first and foremost.' This is the view of Sa'īd ibn al-musayyab and Qatādah. 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ has said that 'the first and foremost' are the Ṣaḥābah who participated in the battle of Badr. Sha'bī said that the Ṣaḥābah who were a party to the Bai'atur-Riḍwān (the pledge taken at the time of the expedition of Ḥudaibiyah) are 'the first and foremost.' And according to each view, after respective 'first and foremost,' the rest of the Ṣaḥābah – *muhājir* (emigrant) or *anṣār* (supporter) – are in the second category. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī)

All these views were based on the intrepretation that takes the preposition من (*min*) in this verse for *tab'īḍ* as aforesaid. Tafsīr Maẓharī has however, reported another interpretation. According to this interpretation, the preposition من (*min*) is not for *tab'id* here. It is rather for *bayan* which explains the preceding words and stands for 'that is'. The translation of the verse, in this case, would be as follows: "As for the first and the foremost people, that is, all the Emigrants (the Muhājirīn) and the supporters (the Anṣār)..." The sentence thus will mean that all the *muhājirīn* and the Anṣār are the first and foremost as compared to the rest of the Muslim community.

To sum up, in accordance with the first Tafsīr, there are two categories of Ṣaḥābah, being that of 'the first and foremost' and that of those who embraced Islām after the change of Qiblah or the battle of Badr or the Bai'atur-Riḍwān. The substance of the last Tafsīr is that the noble Ṣaḥābah, all of them, are but 'the first and the foremost' – because, their 'Īmān (faith) is first and foremost as compared to that of the rest of the Muslim Ummah.

The second sentence of the verse: وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ has been translated as 'and those who followed them in goodness.' It means Muslims who followed the footsteps of 'the first and foremost' precisely and perfectly in all fields of deeds and morals. According to the first Tafsīr of the first sentence, the first category belongs to those Emigrants and Supporters among Ṣaḥābah who embraced Islām after the change of Qiblah or the battle of Badr or the Bai'at of Ḥudaibiyah. After them, all Muslims fall in the second category, Muslims who followed the model set by the noble Ṣaḥābah in all matters of faith, deeds and morals honestly and staunchly right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah.

And according to the other Tafsīr, the expression: اَلَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْا those who followed them) includes great people who came after the noble Ṣaḥā-

bah and who are called Tābi'ī in the Islamic terminology. After these technically specified Tābi'īn or Successors of the Ṣaḥābah, included here are all Muslims who shall keep appearing right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah and who shall follow the noble Ṣaḥābah precisely and perfectly in purity of faith and goodness of deeds (*al-'Īmān and al-'amal-as-ṣāliḥ*).

All the Ṣaḥābah are the people of Jannah and are blessed with the pleasure of Allah

Someone asked Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī, 'what do you say about the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم?' He said, 'the Ṣaḥābah, all of them, are in Jannah – irrespective of whether mistakes and sins may have been committed by some of them.' The man again asked him, 'on what basis did you say that?' He said, 'Read this verse of the Holy Qur'ān: اَلسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ (...the first and foremost...). Here, what has been said about all revered Ṣaḥābah, without any condition, is clear: رضى الله عنهم ورضوا عنه (Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah). However, a condition has been placed in the case of the Tabi'īn (the successor to the Ṣaḥābah), the condition of: اتباع باحسان (following with goodness). This tells us that the revered Ṣaḥābah, all of them, without any condition or restriction or exemption, stand in honor as recipients of Divine pleasure.

After reporting this statement, the author of Tafsīr Maẓharī has said, 'in my view, the following verse carries a more solid proof of the fact that all revered Ṣaḥābah belong to Jannah : لَا يَسْتَوِىْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقٰتَلَ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَقٰتَلُوْا وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى It has been fully and clearly stated in this verse that all revered Ṣaḥābah, first or the last, have been promised *al-ḥusnā*, that is, Jannah or Paradise.'

And in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said, 'the fire of Jahannam (hell) cannot touch the Muslim who has seen me or has seen those who have seen me,' (Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه)

A note of warning

People who criticize some revered Ṣaḥābah on the basis of what transpired during their mutual controversies with the aim of sowing seeds of suspicion and discord in the hearts of those who hold them in esteem are really treading a dangerous course. We seek the protection of Allah against it.

Verse 101

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مُنٰفِقُوْنَ ۛ وَمِنْ اَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ ۛ مَرَدُوْا
عَلَى النِّفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ۭ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ۭ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ
يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

And among those Bedouins who are around you there are hypocrites, and among the people of Madīnah as well. They are adamant in hypocrisy. You do not know them. We know them. We shall punish them twice, then they shall be driven to a great punishment. [101]

Commentary

Mentioned in several previous verses there are hypocrites whose hypocrisy stood exposed through their words and deeds, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did realize that they were hypocrites. Mentioned in the present verse appearing above there are hypocrites whose hypocrisy was so perfect in its camouflage that it remained hidden from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم until then. In this verse, two Divine punishments to come much before 'Ākhirah upon such diehard hypocrites have been mentioned. In the first instance, right here in this world, they are consumed by the concern to hide their hypocrisy and the fear that it may be exposed. Then, no less a punishment is their being under compulsion to respect and follow Islām and Muslims, at least outwardly, despite their extreme malice and hostility for them. And then, there is the other punishment, the punishment of the grave and the punishment of Barzakh (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) that will reach them well before Qiyāmah (doomsday) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter).

Verses 102 – 106

وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ خَلَطُوْا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا ۭ
عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ خُذْ
مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ
صَلٰوتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَاْخُذُ الصَّدَقٰتِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ
هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوْا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ

وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ وَسَتُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰی عٰلِمِ الْغَیْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
فَیُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾ وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ
اِمَّا یُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَاِمَّا یَتُوْبُ عَلَیْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِیْمٌ حَكِیْمٌ ﴿۱۰۶﴾

And there are others who admitted their sins while they had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. It is likely that Allah will relent towards them. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [102]

Take out of their wealth a *Ṣadaqah* (obligatory alms) through which you may cleanse and purify them. Surely, your prayer is peace for them. And Allah is (All-) Hearing, (All-) Knowing. [103]

Have they not come to know that Allah is He who accepts repentance from His slaves and takes the Ṣadaqāt, and that Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. [104]

And say, "Do (what you do) Allah will see your deed, as will the Messenger and the believers." And you shall be returned to the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, then He will tell you what you have been doing. [105]

And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah (comes): either He punishes them or relents towards them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [106]

Commentary

When Muslims were given a general call for Jihād at Tabūk, the weather was extremely hot. The journey was long and they were supposed to be up against the trained army of a big state, the first such episode in Islāmic history. These were some of the causes why people split into different groups.

The first group was that of sincere Muslims who got ready for Jihād without any hesitation at the very first call. Another group first hesitated initially, then joined in. They are the ones mentioned in: اَلَّذِیْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِیْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ یَزِیْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِیْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked – 9:117).

The third group was that of people who were genuinely handicapped because of which they could not go. They have been mentioned

in : لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ (There is no blame on the weak – 9:91). The fourth group belonged to sincere Muslims who had no excuse yet they did not take part in the Jihād because of laziness. They have been mentioned in وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا (And there are others who admitted – 9:102) and اٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ (And there are others whose matter is deferred – 9:106) under study now. The fifth group was that of hypocrites who did not participate in the Jihād because of hypocrisy. They have been mentioned at several places in the previous verses. In short, the fifth group of hypocrites featured mostly in previous verses while the present verse (102) mentions people in the fourth group, that is, those who, despite being true Muslims, did not participate in the Jihād because of laziness.

It was said in the first verse (102) that some had admitted their sins. Their deeds were mixed. Some of their deeds were good while some others were bad. For them, there was hope that Allah Ta'ālā may accept their repentance. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said, 'Ten persons did not go for the battle of Tabūk. They had no valid excuse for it. Later, they were sorry for what they had done. Seven of them tied themselves up to the pillars of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم resolving that they would continue to remain tied as they were like prisoners until the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم were to accept their repentance and untie them. All narratives of the incident agree that Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ was one of them. As for other names, narratives differ.

When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم saw them so tied up and he was told that they had resolved to remain tied until the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم unties them, he said, 'By Allah, I too shall not untie them until Allah Ta'ālā orders me to do that. The crime is serious.' Thereupon, this verse (102) was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم ordered that they be untied. They were. (Qurṭubī)

According to a narrative of Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyab, when people went to untie Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضی اللہ عنہ, he refused and said, 'I shall remain tied until the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم does not, with his pleasure, untie me with his own blessed hands.' So, when he came for the Fajr Ṣalāh, he himself untied him.

What were these mixed deeds?

It has been said in the verse that they had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. Obvious among the good ones were 'Īmān, Ṣalāh,

and Fasting. Then, they had participated in earlier battles with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. And then, following this battle of Tabūk in which they could not participate, they had admitted their misconduct, were ashamed of it and had repented. As for the evil ones, they had not participated in the battle of Tabūk and thus they had acted in a manner that resembled the approach of the hypocrites.

Mixed Deeds of all the Muslims are governed by the same rule

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that this verse though revealed about a particular group, is universal in its application and the injunction it carries is valid until the day of Qiyāmah. It covers Muslims whose deeds are a mixture of the good and the bad. If they were to repent from their sins, it can be hoped that they shall be pardoned and forgiven.

Abū 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه has said, 'this verse of the Holy Qur'ān brings great hope for this *ummah*.' A detailed Ḥadīth relating to the Ascension of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub رضى الله عنه says, 'On the seventh heaven, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم met with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, he saw some people with him whose faces were bright. And some of them had some spots and stains on their faces. When these people went into a stream and came out all washed up, their faces had also turned bright. The Archangel Jibra'īl told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that these people with bright faces you saw first were those who had professed faith and then kept clean from sins: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوْٓا اِيْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ (those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice – 6:82). The others were people who did what was a mixture of good and evil, but repented later. Allah accepted their repentance and their sins were forgiven.' (Qurṭubī)

The imperative: خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً : "Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah (obligatory alms)" in the second verse (103) has its background. Some people, as mentioned a little earlier, had stayed back from the battle of Tabūk without a valid excuse. Then, out of remorse, they had tied themselves to the pillars of the Mosque. Then came the acceptance of their repentance as revealed in the previous verse (102) and they were released from their self-imprisonment. When this happened, they presented their entire wealth as a token of their gratitude so that it could

be given out as *Ṣadaqah*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم refused to accept it by saying that he did not have the authority to take it. Thereupon, this verse (103): خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a *Ṣadaqah*) was revealed and he accepted to take one third of it as *Ṣadaqah*. He did not take the entire wealth, rather, took a part of it – as indicated in the verse. The preposition من (*min*: out of) proves it.

Collection and disbursement of Zakāh is the responsibility of an Islamic State

Though, according to the background of the revelation, the collection of Ṣadaqah was to be made from a particular group of people but, the words being general, they have universal application.

This is the view preferred in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Tafsīr Maẓharī and others. Al-Qurṭubī and Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has gone on to further explain it. According to them, even if the same particular event is taken to be the cause of the revelation in this verse, still then, in terms of the Qur'ānic principle, this injunction shall remain general – and shall remain binding on Muslims right through the day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that most of the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān were revealed in the background of one or the other particular event, but nobody has ever held that their application remains restricted to that particular event. In fact, unless there is a certain proof of its particularization, that injunction is invariably regarded as universally applicable to all Muslims.

On the basis of the same principle, the entire Muslim *ummah* agrees that, though the address in this verse is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, yet this injunction is neither restricted to him, nor to his period of time. Instead of that, every such person who will succceed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Amīr of Muslims shall be the addressee of this injunction, and the assignee to carry it out. It will be one of his duties that he administers the collection of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt paid by Muslims and ensures that these are disbursed on authorized heads.

Even in the event of Jihād declared against those who refused to pay Zakāh during the initial stage of the Caliphate of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, there were some non-payers of Zakāh who had openly rebelled against Islām and had turned apostates. Then, there were

some others who called themselves Muslims and did not refuse that Zakāh was a religious obligation, but the excuse they made for not paying Zakāh was that the authority given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to collect Zakāh from them was valid during the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ only, and they kept paying Zakāh that time. Now, after he has passed away, they questioned, what right did Abū Bakr have to demand Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt from them? In the beginning, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ hesitated about waging Jihād against them for the reason that they were after all Muslims who wanted to avoid paying Zakāh under the cover of a verse of the Qur'ān – therefore, they should not be treated in the manner usual apostates are treated. But, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ had reached an irrevocable decision. He said, 'we shall wage Jihād against anyone who will differentiate between Ṣalāh and Zakāh.'

This gave a clear hint. Today people say that the injunction of Zakāh is particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that it stands dropped after his demise. Tomorrow they may say that Ṣalāh too was particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – because, a verse of the Qur'ān reads: أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ (Establish prayer at the decline of the sun – 17:78) where the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the addressee. But, the injunction of the verse of prayer is universal. It applies to the entire Muslim *ummah*. So, this verse cannot save those who wrongly interpret it as being particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ from becoming *kāfirs*. Similarly, this interpretation in the verse: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah) will not save them from *kufr* and apostasy. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was also satisfied and it was with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah that Jihād was launched against them.

Zakāh is 'Ibādah, not a government tax

In the statement: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ (Take out of their wealth) appearing soon after: صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا (a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] through which you may cleanse and purify them) in verse 103 of the Holy Qur'ān, there is a clear hint that Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt are not like taxes that governments collect to run the system. The truth of the matter is that their purpose is to cleanse the men of wealth themselves from sins.

At this point, it should be noted that the collection of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt yields two benefits. The first benefit is received by the owner of the wealth himself through which he comes out clean from sins and

from the germs of moral diseases that are generated by the greed for wealth. As for the other benefit, it provides support for the weaker components of the society, people who are incapable of finding what they need to eke out an existence. Orphaned children, widows, crippled and handicapped men and women, common people who are poor and needy are obvious examples.

But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has told us about the first benefit only. Thus, by confining itself in that manner, it has also given the indication that the first benefit is what happens to be the real objective of Zakāh and *Ṣadaqāt*. The second benefit comes as a corollary. Therefore, in the event there is no orphan, widow, or a poor or needy person present at any place or time, still then, the injunction of Zakāh as applicable to the wealthy will not stand dropped.

What has been stated here has its support in the practice of past communities. When some part of wealth or property was set aside for Allah, its use became impermissible for everyone. Rather, according to the custom, this offering was put at some detached place where came a lightning from the heavens and burnt it up. This was a sign that Allah Ta'ālā has accepted the *Ṣadaqah*. When this heavenly fire did not come, it was supposed to be a sign of the Ṣadaqah remaining unacceptable. Nobody would then touch this ill-omened property.

This makes it clear that the legal enforcement of *Zakāh* and *Ṣadaqāt* is not exclusively designed to alleviate the suffering of needy people. In fact, it is a financial obligation and an act of *'Ibādah* – very similar to praying and fasting that are acts of physical *'Ibādah*. This is one of the distinctions of the blessed community of Muslims that their poor and needy have been allowed to use wealth set aside in the way of Allah. A Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth from Muslim reports its confirmation from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

A question and its answer

A question arises here – when the repentance of these gentlemen was accepted following the event mentioned above, it stands established that sins were forgiven and purification was accomplished through the very act of repentance. What then, would be the sense of declaring that a portion from their wealth was being taken to purify them?

The answer is that the sin has, no doubt, been forgiven by virtue of the repentance, but it is quite possible that it may have left behind some residual effects following the forgiveness of sin which could become the cause of falling into sin. *Ṣadaqah* removes such residual effects and makes purification perfect.

The word: صلوة (*ṣalāh*) used in the expression: وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ (and pray for them – 103) means praying for Allah's mercy. This corresponds to what has been reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – that he prayed for some people by using this very word: *ṣalāh*, for example: اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى اٰلِ اَبِىْ اَوْفٰى (O Allah, bless the family of Abū Awfā) as is reported in a Ḥadīth. But, later on the use of the word: *ṣalāt* became special to prophets, may peace be upon them. Therefore, Muslim jurists say that now one should not pray for anyone using the word: *ṣalāh*. Instead, the use of this word should be limited to prophets to avoid any ambiguousness or doubt.[1] (Bayān al-Qur'ān etc.)

Here we see that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to pray for those who give Ṣadaqah. On this basis, some Muslim jurists rule that it is *wājib* (obligatory, necessary) for the Muslim head of the state (Imām, 'Amīr) to pray for those who give Ṣadaqah. However, there are others who take this command to be of a recommendatory nature (*mustaḥabb*: recommended). (Qurṭubī)

Let us now turn to the statement: وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِاللّٰهِ (And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah – 106). We already know that seven of the ten believers, who had missed the battle of Tabūk without a valid excuse, had demonstrated their heart-felt remorse by tying themselves up to the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque. The injunction which covers them appeared in the first verse (102): اٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا (And there are others who admitted their sins). Verse 106 is now referring to the other three gentlemen who had not done what the group of seven had done in the *Masjid*. Thus, they had not admitted their misconduct openly. In their case, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered his Companions to see that Muslims boycott them by not talking to them. When things reached those limits, they learnt their les-

1. However, it is permissible to use this word for others in conjunction with a prophet. It is therefore allowed to say, اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّعَلٰى اٰلِهٖ وَاَصْحَابِهٖ (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

son, confessed to their misconduct and repented sincerely, following which orders were given for their pardon. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Verses 107 – 110

وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَّكُفْرًا وَّتَفْرِيْقًا ۢ بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
وَاِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ اِنْ
اَرَدْنَاۤ اِلَّا الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾ لَا تَقُمْ
فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ؕ لَمَسْجِدٌ اُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوٰى مِنْ اَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ اَحَقُّ اَنْ
تَقُوْمَ فِيْهِ ؕ فِيْهِ رِجَالٌ يُّحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ
الْمُطَّهِّرِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾ اَفَمَنْ اَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهٗ عَلٰى تَقْوٰى مِنَ اللّٰهِ
وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ اَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهٗ عَلٰى شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ
بِهٖ فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾
لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِيْ بَنَوْا رِيْبَةً فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ تَقَطَّعَ
قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۰﴾

And (there are) those who have built a mosque to cause mischief and infidelity and to create dissention among the believers and to make preparations for one who has been at war with Allah and His Messenger even before. And they will certainly swear (and say), "We intended nothing but good." And Allah testifies that they are liars. [107]

Do not ever stand there (in prayer). In fact, the mosque that was founded on *Taqwā* (piety) from the very first day is more-worthy that you stand there. In it there are people who like to observe purity; and Allah loves those observing purity. [108]

Is, then, a person who has founded his building on fear from Allah and His pleasure better or the one who has founded his building on the edge of an abyss about to collapse, so it did collapse with him into the fire of Jahannam? And Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people. [109]

The building they have made shall always remain a

source of doubt in their hearts unless their hearts are cut into pieces. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [110]

Commentary

Anti-Islām activities of hypocrites have been described in several previous verses. The present verses mention yet another conspiracy hatched by them. It has been reported that there was a man in Madīnah. His name was Abū 'Āmir. He had become a Christian during the days of Jāhiliyyah and was known as Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib (that is, a monk). This is the same Abū 'Āmir whose son Hanẓalah رضی الله عنه is a well-known Ṣaḥābī whose dead body was washed by angels and which gave him the sobriquet of 'the one who was bathed by angels.' But, the father stuck by his error and remained a Christian.

When the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم came to Madīnah, Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib visited him and criticized Islām. Even the answers given by the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم did not satisfy this unfortunate man. In fact, he said, 'may the liar between the two of us be cursed and die in travel far away from friends and relatives.' He also said, 'I shall be there to help any aggressor against you.' And so he did. He fought on the side of the enemies of Muslims in all battles right through the battle of Ḥunain. When the big and strong tribe of Hawāzin too was defeated, he lost hope. He ran away to Syria, the stronghold of Christians where he died far away from his friends and relatives. The prayer he had made was before him. When disgrace is destined for someone, this is how he acts. His own prayer brought that disgrace upon him.

But, as long as he lived, he remained busy hatching conspiracies against Islām and Muslims. He virtually tried to induce the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah and expel Muslims from there.

One aspect of this conspiracy materialized when he wrote a letter to the hypocrites of Madīnah with whom he had a sinister understanding. He told them that he was working on the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah. But, it was necessary to have group strength to lend local support to the invader. For this purpose, he suggested that they should make a building right there in Madīnah giving people the impression that they were building a mosque so that Muslims do not get to be suspicious. After that, they should get their men together in this place and collect as much of weapons and supplies as they could. He

wanted this to become an undercover center where his accomplices would be conducting their activities against Muslims by mutual consultation.

It was on his suggestion that twelve hypocrites got together in Qubā', a locality of Madīnah where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first stayed during his *hijrah* and where he had built a *masjid*. They chose the same place to lay the foundation of another '*masjid*.' Ibn Isḥāq and others have also reported the names of these hypocrites. Then, to keep Muslims under deception, the hypocrites made a plan that they would have the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم lead a Ṣalāh in congregation at their so-called *masjid* so that all Muslims are convinced that this new place was also a *masjid* very much like the one built there earlier.

A delegation from them came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They pleaded that the existing Masjid of Qubā' was far away. It was difficult for old and sick people to reach there. Moreover, they argued, the Masjid of Qubā' itself was not spacious enough to accommodate all residents of the locality. Therefore, they claimed, they had founded another *masjid* for that purpose so that older Muslims may benefit by it. Finally, (releasing their punch line) they said, 'please lead a Ṣalāh in this '*masjid*' so that it stands blessed!'

That was a time when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was getting ready for the battle of Tabūk. He told them that he would be unable to do that as he was about to leave the city but he promised that he would pray there when he returned.

However, on his return from the battle of Tabūk, when he camped at a place close to Madīnah, the verses cited above were revealed to him which had exposed the conspiracy of these hypocrites. After the revelation of these verses, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered some of his Companions, 'Āmir ibn Sakan, Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamzah and others, to go, demolish and burn the structure (of the ill-intentioned '*masjid*'). So these gentlemen took off, carried out the orders and the structure was leveled flat on the ground. (This event has been abridged from narratives reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī.)

Quoting Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Ṣāliḥī, Tafsīr Maẓharī also reports that the site of Masjid Ḍirār was still lying vacant at the time the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had reached and settled in Madīnah. When he allowed 'Āsim ibn 'Adiyy to build his house on that site, he submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, I do not like to build a house on a cursed site about which these verses of the Qur'ān have been revealed. Nevertheless, Thābit ibn Aqram is really in need of a house for he has none. Please allow him to make a house here.' So, going along with his suggestion, he gave this plot of land to Thābit ibn Aqram. But, as fate would have it, since the time Sayyidnā Thābit رضى الله عنه came to live in the house he made there, he either had no child or if he did, the child did not live.

Historians have added that this place was cursed not only for human beings but also for domestic birds and animals that could not survive with their normal way of living. Thus, after that time, this place lies desolate at some distance from the well-known Masjid Qubā'.

After having gone through the details of the event, let us now turn to the text of the cited verses. It was said in the first verse (107): وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مَسْجِدًا (And [there are] those who have built a mosque) to bring harm upon Muslims.

This verse points out to three motives behind the making of this '*masjid*':

1. The first one is: ضِرَارًا (*dirāran*: to cause harm to Muslims). The words 'ضرار: *ḍirār*' and 'ضرر:*ḍarar*' are both used in the Arabic language to carry the sense of causing harm. As for difference between the two, it has been said that '*ḍarar*' is a harm that brings gain for the person harming but causes loss for the harmed. And '*ḍirār*' is the inflicting of a loss upon other people while it brings just no gain for the person inflicting it. Since, this was going to be the fate of this '*masjid*' – that its founders gain nothing out of it – therefore, the word '*ḍirar*' was used here.

2. The second motive reads: تَفْرِيْقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (to cause dissention among the believers). It means that, by setting up this '*masjid*', they looked forward to creating a division among the community of Muslims. They hoped to wean out a group that would be offering Ṣalāh in their *masjid* as a sort of separate entity. Then, it may have also resulted in reducing the number of Muslims going for their prayers to the old Masjid Qubā'.

3. The third motive was spelt out as: اِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللّٰهَ i.e. to provide a

sanctuary to enemies of Allah and His Messenger and a forum to conspire against Muslims.

This presentation as a whole proves that the *'masjid'* which was declared to be a 'harmful mosque' (Masjid Ḍirār) by the Holy Qur'ān, and which was demolished and burnt down under the orders of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, was no *masjid* in the real sense. Nor was it intended to be a place where people could pray. The three objectives behind it have been mentioned immediately above. From here we learn the rules that should be followed in our time. Today, may be some Muslims were to make a *masjid* close to and in competition of another Masjid, while their purpose is nothing but the same mutual discord, the same old effort to split up the congregation of the first *masjid*, or any other evil interest of this nature. If so, the maker of such a *masjid* will deserve no reward from Allah. Rather, he would be a sinner because of having created dissention between Muslims – but, despite all this, that place shall be called a *masjid* in terms of Islāmic law, and the etiquette and rules relating to mosques shall apply to it. Demolishing it or putting it on fire shall not be permissible. And the Ṣalāh of those who pray in it will also be valid – though, doing so shall continue to be a sin in itself.

From here we also learn about another rule relevant in contemporary setting. If a Muslim makes a *masjid* in that manner, either to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the maker will, though, not get the reward of making a *masjid*, instead, will incur a sin, yet it will not be what Masjid Ḍirār is in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, it will not be called by that name. When some people notice a *masjid* like that, they would say that it was Masjid Ḍirār. This is not correct. However, one could say that it was like Masjid Dirar. Therefore, its building can also be stayed – as done by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه through a court order where he had instructed that another *masjid* should not be made close to the one already there lest the congregation and flourish of the first *masjid* is affected adversely. (Tafsīr Kashshaf)

About this Masjid Ḍirār, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been given the order: لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا :'Do not ever stand there (in prayer) – 108.' The word *'qiyām'* in the text denotes standing for prayer. The sense is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should never go in to offer his

prayers in a mosque by that name.

Ruling:

What it tells us is: If, even today, a new *masjid* is made adjacent to the one already there unnecessarily, just to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the better choice is not to offer prayers therein – though, Ṣalāh remains valid.

In the same verse (108), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also been told that it is correct for him to pray in the particular *masjid* the foundation of which has been laid on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) from day one. And then, the people who offer their Ṣalāh in it love to observe full precaution in remaining cleansed and pure (of all physical and spiritual impurities) – for Allah too likes such meticulous observers of self-purity.

The context of the verse shows what is being referred to here is Masjid Qubā' where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say his prayers at that time. There are some Ḥadīth narratives that also support this view. (As reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās, by 'Āmr ibn Shaibah from Sahl al-Anṣārī and by Ibn Khuzaimah in his Ṣaḥīḥ from 'Uwaimir ibn Sā'idah – with reference to Maẓharī)

As for the reports which say that it refers to the Prophet's Mosque, they do not contradict it. The reason is that the foundation of the Mosque of the Prophet was laid in accordance with a revealed command by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his blessed hands. It goes without saying that its foundation rests on Taqwā, that is, on purity, piety and fear of Allah. And who else could be more purified than the noble messenger of Allah? Therefore, that too is is a *masjid* founded on *taqwā*. (As reported by Tirmidhī on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه with the chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – from Qurṭubī)

At the end of the verse (108), it was said: فِيْهِ رِجَالٌ يُّحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْا (In it there are people who like to observe purity). In this verse, the *masjid* declared worthier for the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the one the foundation of which was laid on Taqwā from day one. Thus, both Masjid Qubā' and the Mosque of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are included in the sense of the verse. Also pointed to in this verse there is yet another merit of this *masjid* – that those who prayed in

this *masjid* were a kind of people who did their best to remain cleansed and pure. The word for purity used in the text is *Ṭahārah*. The sense of *Ṭahārah* at this place includes purity from common filth and impurities, as well as purity from sins and bad morals. Those who offered their prayers in Masjid Qubā' and the Prophet's Mosque were generally equipped with all these virtues.

Special Note

From here we also come to know that the merit or superiority of a *masjid* really depends on the fact that it should have been made with absolute sincerity for the sake of Allah. And to put it conversely, there should not be any trace of duplicity, any motive to earn name, fame and recognition, or any other false and corrupting interest involved in its making. Then, we also learn that the quality of those who pray in a *masjid* is significant. If they are good, righteous, knowledgeable about their religion ('Ālim) and are devoted to the worship of Allah ('Ābīd), the superiority of the *masjid* increases. Offering prayers in a *masjid* frequented by such God-fearing people is more merit worthy.

In the third (109) and the fourth (110) verses, Masjid Ḍirār (the harmful mosque) made by the hypocrites has been condemned as it has to be when compared with a *masjid* that is blessed. This has been accomplished through the use of a similitude. The surface of the land on which they were laying the foundation of their '*masjid*' has been likened to a landmass that has been corroded on the inside by flowing water. The topsoil looks solid and smooth. Now, if someone starts building there, it is obvious that the whole thing would collapse instantly. Similarly, the foundation of this Masjid Ḍirār was inherently unstable. The result was that it collapsed and went right into the fire of Jahannam. The expression 'collapsed into the fire of Jahannam' could be figurative in its sense – in that it smoothed out the way of Jahannam for its makers. Some others have taken it in the real sense – in that the *masjid*, when made to collapse, went into the Jahannam. Allah knows best.

Then, in the last verse (110), it was said that this building would always keep increasing the doubt and hypocrisy in their hearts unless their hearts are shredded into pieces. The sense is that their doubt, hypocrisy, envy and chagrin would go on increasing right to the end of their life.

Verses 111 - 112

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اشْتَرٰى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاَنَّ لَهُمُ
الْجَنَّةَ ؕ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقْتُلُوْنَ وَ يُقْتَلُوْنَ ۫ وَعْدًا
عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ وَ الْقُرْاٰنِ ؕ وَمَنْ اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوْا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِيْ بَايَعْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١١١﴾ اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ الْحٰمِدُوْنَ السَّآئِحُوْنَ
الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ الْاٰمِرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَالنَّاهُوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَالْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against (a promise) that Paradise shall be for them. They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed – a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān. And who can fulfill his covenant more than Allah? So, rejoice in the deal you have made, and that is the great achievement. [111]

(They are) those who repent, those who worship, those who praise (Allah), those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah. And give the good news to the believers. [112]

Commentary

Sequence

Previous verses carried a condemnation of those staying behind without a valid excuse and missing the Jihād. The present verses take up the merit of *mujāhidīn*.

The background of revelation

As explained by the majority of commentators, these verses were revealed about the participants of Bai'atul-'Aqabah (the pledge of allegiance to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at al-'Aqabah) which was taken from the Anṣār of Madīnah before Hijrah in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Therefore, despite that the entire Sūrah is Madanī,

these verses have been termed as Makkī.

'Al-'Aqabah' is part of a mountain. Here, it refers to the 'Aqabah that forms a part of the mountain along the Jamratu al-'Aqabah (the stone pillar of 'Aqabah) in Minā. (In our time, due to the increased number of Ḥujjāj [Ḥajj pilgrims], this part of the mountain has been leveled to form a smooth surface with the only exception of Jamarah [the stone pillar] which still stands there). It is on this 'Aqabah that a pledge of allegiance بيعة (*bai'ah*) was taken from the people of Madīnah thrice. The first pledge came in the eleventh year of the Prophet's advent. Six persons embraced Islām, gave the pledge and returned to Madīnah. When they arrived there, Islām and the Prophet of Islām became the talk of the town. Next year, it was during the Ḥajj season that twelve people assembled at the same place. Out of these, five had taken part in the first pledge while the other seven were new. All of them took the pledge. By that time, the number of Muslims in Madīnah had increased to more than forty. They requested that someone should be sent to teach Qur'ān to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umair رضى الله عنه. He taught Qur'ān to Muslims present there as well as conveyed the message of Islām around, as a result of which major groups of people in Madīnah entered the fold of Islām.

After that, in the thirteenth year of the Prophet's advent, seventy men and women assembled at the same place. This is the third Bai'atu al-'Aqabah – and the last. Generally, when reference is made to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, it means this very Bai'ah (pledge of allegiance). This pledge made it binding on participants that they would uphold the basic beliefs (*'aqā'id*) and deeds (*a'māl*) of Islām, and would particularly be ready to take part in Jihād against the disbelievers, and protect and support the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he migrates and reaches Madīnah. In this connection, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضى الله عنه submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, a compact is being made at this time. If there are any conditions regarding your Lord or regarding yourself, let these be mentioned there clearly.' He said, 'As for Allah Ta'ālā, I lay down the condition that all of you shall worship Him – and worship none but Him. As for myself, the condition is that you shall protect me as you protect your own lives, wealth, property and children.' They asked, 'if we fulfill these two conditions, what shall we

get in return?' He said, 'you will get Jannah.' All in delight, they said, 'we are pleased with this deal, so pleased that we shall never request on our own that it be cancelled nor shall we like it to be cancelled.

At this place, since the pledge took the apparent form of a transaction of give and take, this verse (111) was revealed in the terminology of a business deal: إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ (Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them). After hearing this verse, Sayyidnā Barā' ibn Ma'rūr, Abū al-Haitham and As'ad رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین were the first ones who placed their hands on the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. They were promising in effect that they were readily agreeable to this deal and they would protect the Holy Prophet ﷺ as they protected their family and would stand by him to face any challenge, even if it came from the combined forces of the blacks and whites on this Earth.

This is the very first verse of Jihād

Injunctions of Jihād did not exist during the early Makkan period. This is first verse about fighting and killing which was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah itself, though its implementation began after Hijrah. After that, came another verse: أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ (Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought against – al-Ḥajj 22:39). When this Bai'atu al-'Aqabah (pledge of 'Aqabah) was concluded in secret from the disbelievers of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم ordered his noble Companions to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah. Groups of them started migrating gradually. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم remained behind waiting for the permission from Allah Ta'ālā. When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ decided to migrate, he held him back so that he could accompany him. (This whole event has been described in Tafsīr Maẓharī with relevant references)

We can now move to the second sentence of the verse (111): يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (الی) فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ (They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed ... a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān). This verse tells us that fighting in the way of Allah was a commandment also revealed for past communities in their Scriptures. As for the popular assumption that there is no injunction of Jihād in the Injīl, it is possible that, as part of the changes made by people who came later, the injunctions of Jihād were ex-

punged. Allah knows best.

At the end of the verse (111), it was said: فَاسْتَبْشِرُوْا بِبَيْعِكُمُ (So, rejoice in the deal you have made). The agreement arrived at with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this event of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah had, on the surface, turned into a sort of buying and selling deal. Therefore, it was expressed through the word: شراء (Allah has bought) at the beginning of the verse. In the present sentence, Muslims were told that they had struck a good deal which will bring blessings for them. The reason was that they had tendered their life and wealth that were mortal while that which they received in return was eternal. If we come to think about it, we would realize that wealth was the only thing they spent out. As for life, that is, the essential spirit, that will remain even after death, and remain forever. And if we were to look deeper into the reality of wealth, that too happens to be nothing but the gift of Allah Almighty. When born, human beings visit the world empty-handed. It was He who made them own everything around them and it was He who made His own gift the price of eternal blessings and gave them Paradise. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said, 'this is a strange deal where the commodity and the price have both been given to you!'

The sage, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Behold, what a profitable business is this that Allah has thrown open to every believer!' And he also said, 'It is Allah who has blessed you with wealth and property. Spend a little out of it and buy Paradise.' (Maẓharī)

The last verse (112) which begins with the words: اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ "(They are) those who repent, those who worship...) describes the attributes of the same believers about whom it was said earlier that Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them. Though, the verse was revealed as relating to a particular group of participants in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, but the sense of the verse covers all *mujāhidīn* in the way of Allah. As for the list of their attributes which opens with: اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ (those who repent), they are not there as a condition, because the promise of Paradise has been made for Jihād in the way of Allah, in an absolute sense. The purpose behind the delineation of these attributes is to stress that those who deserve Paradise do have such attributes – as was specially the case with the noble Companions who were a party to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah.

The word: اَلسَّآئِحُوْنَ (*as-sā'iḥūn*: translated literally as 'those who jour-

ney'), according to the majority of commentators, means those who fast (*ṣā'imūn*). Actually, this word has been derived from: سياحه (*siyāḥah*: journey, pilgrimage). Before Islām, *siyāḥah* was taken to be an act of worship in the Christian religion that meant leaving home for the sake of worship. Islām declared it to be monasticism, and prohibited it. It was replaced with fasting as an act of worship. The reason is that *siyāḥah* taught disengagement from worldly life while fasting taught that one should abstain from worldly desires for a limited period of time living at home. It is on the same basis that Jihād too has been equated with *siyāḥah* in some reports. Ibn Mājah, Ḥākim and Baihaqī have authentically reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: سِيَاحَةُ اُمَّتِیْ اَلْجِهَادُ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ (The *siyāḥah* of my ummah is Jihād in the way of Allah).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said that سَآئِحِیْن (*sā'iḥīn*: those who journey) in the Qur'ān means: صَآئِمِیْن (*ṣā'imīn*: those who fast). Explaining سَآئِحِیْن (*as-sā'iḥīn*: those who journey), 'Ikrimah said, 'they are students who leave their homes to seek religious knowledge.' (Maẓharī)

At this place, seven attributes of believing *mujāhidīn* have been described as those who repent, those who worship, those who praise Allah, those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. After having enumerated these seven attributes, the eighth attribute was put as: اَلْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ: 'those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah.' Actually, this expression is an embodiment of all attributes mentioned earlier. In other words, the details given in those seven attributes have been eloquently reduced to one small sentence which means that they are committed to the limits set by Allah, that is, they obey, adhere to and protect the injunctions of the Sharī'ah of Islām.

At the end of the verse (112), it was said: وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And give the good news to the believers). It means that the Prophet of Islām should convey to believers who have the attributes mentioned above the good news of blessings nobody could ever imagine, nor could it be explained in words, nor has anyone heard about it from any source. The reference is to the ultimate blessings of Paradise.

Verses 113 – 114

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَلَوْ

كَانُوٓا اُولِىْ قُرْبٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ اِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ اَنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُ ؕ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَاَوَّاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks*, even if they are kinsmen, after it became clear to them that they are the people of hell. [113]

And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him. Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing (before Allah), forbearing. [114]

Commentary

The entire Sūrah Al-Taubah consists of injunctions of absolution and withdrawal from *kāfirs* (disbelievers) and *mushriks* (those who associate partners with Allah). The Sūrah opens with the words: بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah) and that is why this Sūrah is also known as Sūrah al-Barā'ah. The injunctions appearing earlier relate to withdrawal and severance of relationships with *kāfirs* and *mushriks* in this worldly life. The same injunction of withdrawal and severance of relationships appears in the the present verses, but it relates to the life hereinafter. It makes it impermissible even to pray for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* after their death – as it appears in a previous verse (84) where the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been prohibited from offering funeral prayers for hypocrites.

The background of revelation

The event that was the cause or background of the revelation of this *āyah* has been reported in a narrative appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to this report, Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, had not, though, embraced Islām, yet he continued to support and protect the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم throughout his life. He did not listen to any member of his clan in this

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

matter. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too was concerned about him. He wished that his uncle would somehow recite the Kalimah and embrace Islām. He would thus be able to intercede on his behalf and he could have his deliverance from the punishment of Jahannam. When Abū Ṭālib was suffering from his last sickness and death became certain, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was worried. He wished if his uncle were to recite the Kalimah even now, things might work for him. He came close to him in that state of anxiety – but, Abū Jahl and 'Abdullāh ibn Umayyah (disbelieving diehards) were already there. He said, 'my uncle, recite the Kalimah: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰه (*Lā ilāha illallāh*). I shall try to seek forgiveness for you.' But, Abū Jahl interrupted, 'would you forsake the faith of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (father of Abū Ṭālib)?' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeated what he had said several times. But, every time, Abū Jahl would say the same thing he had said before – until the last words spoken by Abū Ṭālib were, 'I am on the faith of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.' It was in this very condition that he died. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم swore that he would continue seeking forgiveness for him until he was prohibited from it. Thereupon, this verse of prohibition was revealed where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all Muslims were prohibited from praying for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* – even if they were close relatives.

This put some Muslims into doubt. Was it not, they thought, that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام too had prayed for his disbelieving father? To answer it, the second verse (114) was revealed: مَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ In gist, it means: As for the prayer made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for his father, it was conditioned by circumstances. In the beginning, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not know that he would keep on sticking to his disbelief right through the end and would die a disbeliever. In other words, his going to Hell was not certain. That was the time when he had made the promise that he would pray for his forgiveness: سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّيْ (I shall ask my Lord to forgive you – Maryam 19:47). Later, when it became clear to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that he was an enemy of Allah, that is, he had remained a disbeliever right through the end, he elected to become indifferent to him and stopped asking pardon for him.

With regard to the mention of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام praying for the forgiveness of his father at different places in the Qur'ān, it should

all be taken in that sense, whereby it would mean that Allah may give him the *taufīq* of 'Īmān and Islām so that he could be forgiven.

When the disbelievers inflicted a wound on the blessed face of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during the battle of Uḥud, he was seen wiping blood from his face and praying: اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِيْ اِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ (O Allah, forgive my people. They do not know). The object of this prayer of forgiveness for the disbelievers is no other but that Allah may bless them with the *taufīq* of 'Īmān and Islām so that they could become deserving of being forgiven.

Imām al-Qurṭubī said, 'this proves that it is permissible to pray for the forgiveness of a living *kāfir* with the intention that this disbelieving person may have the *taufīq* of 'Īmān and become deserving of forgiveness.'

In the last sentence of the verse (114), it was said: اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَاَوَّاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ (Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing [before Allah], forbearing). The word: اواه (*awwāh*) is used for a host of meanings. Al-Qurṭubī has reported fifteen meanings of this word but they are all close to each other without any real difference between them. Some of these are: one who sighs a lot, or one who supplicates profusely, or one who is full of mercy for the servants of Allah. This (last) meaning is reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه.

Verses 115 – 116

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا ۢ بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ
مَّا يَتَّقُوْنَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ؕ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾

And Allah is not to make a people go astray after He has given them guidance, unless He explains to them what they should avoid. Surely, in respect of everything Allah is (All-) Knowing. [115]

Surely, to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death. And, other than Allah, you have neither a supporter, nor a helper. [116]

Verses 117 – 119

لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ
فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ
ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ ط اِنَّهٗ بِهِمْ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ
الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا ط حَتّٰۤى اِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ
وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوْۤا اَنْ لَّا مَلْجَاَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِلَّاۤ اِلَيْهِ ط
ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوْبُوْا ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١١٨﴾ع
يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾

Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Muhājirs (Emigrants) and the Anṣār (the Supporters) who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked, then He relented towards them. Surely, to them He is Very Kind, Very Merciful. [117]

And (He relented) towards the three whose matter was deferred until when the earth was straitened for them despite all its vastness, and even their own souls were straitened for them, and they realized that there is no refuge from Allah, except in Him. Then He turned towards them, so that they may repent. Surely, Allah is the Most-Relenting, the Very Merciful. [118]

O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful. [119]

Commentary

In the comments on verse 102: وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا (And there are those who admitted...), it was said that following the general call of Jihād at Tabūk which required all Muslims to join in, the people of Madīnah had split into five groups. Two of them were of those who elected to stay behind without any valid excuse, a detailed description of which has appeared in previous verses. Here, in the present verses, three kinds of sincere believers have been mentioned. First were those who responded to the call of Jihād instantly. They have been identified in the initial sentence: اِتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ (who followed him in the hour of

hardship) of verse 117. The second group was of those who hesitated during the early stage but recovered soon and got ready for Jihād with other participants. They have been described in the sentence: مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked) of the same verse (117).

The third group was that of the believers who did not, though, participate in the Jihād because of their laziness at that time, yet, later on, they regretted and sought forgiveness – and ultimately, the Taubah made by them was accepted. However, their group was further divided in two types. Originally, they were ten in number. Seven out of these men demonstrated their genuine remorse and repentance instantly soon after the return of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The manner in which they did so was unusual. They tied themselves up with the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque with the resolve that they would stay tied as long as their Taubah was not accepted. The verse known as the 'Āyah of Taubah granting forgiveness for them was revealed immediately then. Details can be seen under comments on verse 102. The remaining three out of the ten were those who did not act in that manner. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked his Companions to boycott them whereby no one was to greet or talk to them. This thing was terrible. It really disturbed them. They have been mentioned in the second verse (118) through the words: وَّعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا (And towards the three whose matter was deferred) where comes the acceptance of their Taubah soon after which the order to boycott them was withdrawn.

Before we move on to explain the first verse (117): لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ (Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Supporters who followed him in the hour of hardship) in some details, let us answer a question first.

Is it not that Taubah is done because of having committed an act of sin and disobedience? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is protected from that (*ma'ṣūm*). What, then, would be the sense of accepting his Taubah ('relenting towards the Prophet')? In addition to that, there were the Ṣaḥābah from among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār who had opted for Jihād since the very beginning. They too had not done anything wrong. For what crime had they made their Taubah that was accepted?

The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them safe from sin. This was expressed as Taubah, or that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them

tawwāb, those who turn to Allah. This indicates that no one is free from the need to make Taubah, not even the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and his closest Companions – as it appears in another verse: وَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا (and turn towards Allah in repentance, all of you – 24:31). The reason is that the degrees and ranks of nearness to Allah are endless. Whoever has reached a certain station should realize that there is a higher station ahead and, as compared to that high station, the present one is a shortcoming. The quest must go on. Let one seek forgiveness for any shortcoming he may have at his present station so that he could move on to the next, the higher.

Coming to words: سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ (translated as 'the hour of hardship') appearing in verse 117, the Holy Qur'ān has employed this expression to portray the condition of the Muslims on the occasion of this very Jihād because they were poor and straitened on many counts. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, 'they had one mount for every ten men. They had to take turns to ride. The wherewithal required for such a trip was very short and ordinary. On the other hand, the heat was intense and scorching. Water in en route was scarce and at distances.

As for the next sentence: مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked), the زیغ (*zaigh*: crookedness) of the hearts of some people referred to here does not mean some deviation from faith. In fact, it means to lose heart and wish to avoid action in Jihād because of the hardship of hot weather and the dearth of necessary supplies. Ḥadīth narratives prove that. It was in view of these hardships they faced that their repentance was accepted.

Verse 118 begins with the words: وَّعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred). Here, the word: خُلِّفُوْا (*khullifū*) literally means 'those left behind.' It carries the sense of 'those the matter of whose repentance was deferred' – as opted for in the translation of the text. These three gentlemen: Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik, Murarah ibn Rabī' and Hilāl ibn Umayyah رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین were from the Anṣār of Madīnah and had a distinguished record in the service of Islām. Earlier, they had participated in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah and in many battles with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. But, it was only by chance that they slipped in this manner. Then, there were those hypocrites who did not take part in this Jihād because of their hypocrisy, they gave them the kind of advises that dampened their

courage. But, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم returned from this Jihād, all those hypocrites came to him, presented false excuses, took false oaths and tried to please the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who entrusted the inward state of their hearts with Allah and simply accepted their outward declarations on oath. Thus, they went on living their normal lives. Some people gave the same suggestion to these Anṣārī gentlemen – that they should also establish their innocence by offering false excuses. But, their hearts admonished them. They knew that they had already committed a sin, that of remaining behind in Jihād. Now, how could they compound it with another sin, that of lying before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم? Therefore, they came up with a clean breast and confessed to their misconduct. In punishment, Muslims were asked not to greet or talk to them. In the end, the Holy Qur'ān laid bare the reality of the whole thing. Those who had fortified their excuses with false oaths were exposed, the details of which appear in several earlier verses from: يَعْتَذِرُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمْ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ (They will make excuses to you – 94) to: عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ (upon those is the evil cycle – 98). Regarding the truth told and confession made by these three gentlemen, it is enough to say that the fact of their Taubah was revealed in this verse. They faced fifty days of avoidance by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and a boycott of greeting and conversation by the Companions, a heart-rending experience indeed. Finally came the day when, amidst ecstatic scenes of having been so honorably acquitted and of exuberant congratulations for it, they regained the confidence of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, and that of all Muslims.

Details of the event relating to these three Anṣārī elders from authentic Aḥādīth

In the two authentic collections of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in most books of Ḥadīth, there appears a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ in connection with this event. Since, it consists of many elements of guidance, solutions of religious problems and facts worthy of consideration, therefore, it seemed appropriate that a full translation of this Ḥadīth should be reproduced here. Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ, one of the three gentlemen, has described the details of this event as given below:

'Every battle in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم participated, I was with him, except the battle of Tabūk. However, the battle of Badr

came all of a sudden, and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had also not asked everyone to participate in it, and was also not angry with those who had not participated in it. In this too, I was not present. And I was also present on the night of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah where we had made the covenant of supporting and protecting Islām. And this presence of mine at the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah is dearer to me as compared to my (possible) presence at the battle of Badr – though, the battle of Badr is better known among people. As for the background of my absence from the battle of Tabūk, the truth is that I had never been so rich as I was at that time. By God, I never had two mounts before that which I then had.

While marching out from Madīnah for his battles, the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was that he would conceal his intentions by advancing in a direction just the opposite of the direction in which he was to go for Jihād. The intention was to confuse spying hypocrites lest they sound off the enemy. And he used to say, 'in war, (such strategy of) deception (*khudāh'*) is permissible.'

Then, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was ready to carry out his plan for the Jihād (of Tabūk, which was unusual for several reasons). The heat was intense. Muslim forces were short on supplies. The journey was long. Then, they were going to fight against an enemy stronger in strength and overwhelming in numbers. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم made the call for Jihād openly and publicly so that Muslims could make all necessary preparations for it in advance.'

According to the report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the numerical strength of those who participated in this Jihād was more than ten thousand. Ḥākim reports from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ who said, 'when we set out for this Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, our number was more than thirty thousand.'

'Since no muster roll of those who set out for this Jihād was put on record in writing, therefore, those who did not wish to go out for this Jihād had an opportunity on hand. If they did not go, nobody would be able to find that out, they thought. The time when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم set out for Jihād was a time when dates were ripe and the growers were busy. Such was the condition when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and common Muslims started getting ready for the journey. It was a Thursday when he set out for the journey. He liked to travel

on a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

As for myself, I went out every morning to prepare for Jihād, but came back without having done it. My heart said, 'I am capable of Jihād. I must go.' But, days passed and my intention kept being put off until a tomorrow – until the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims departed for Jihād. Still then, my heart kept urging me to leave and join up somewhere en route – alas, only if I were to do that! But, unfortunately, this could not be done.

When, after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, wherever I went in Madīnah, the surroundings put me to grief. At that time, what one saw throughout Madīnah were sights of people who were either sunk in hypocrisy, or were sick and crippled absolutely unable to travel. On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not think of me anywhere on this whole journey until he reached Tabūk. It was there in a gathering that he said, 'what happened to Ka'b ibn Mālik?'

A man from (the tribe of) Banū Salimah said, '*yā rasūlallāh*, he has been detained by his nice dress and his looking towards his shoulders (in self-admiration). Then, Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه told this man, 'what you have said is bad' – and then, turning to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he submitted – '*yā rasūlallāh*, by God, we know nothing about him except that which is good.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم became silent.

When I heard the news, says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was coming back, I was concerned, almost close to concocting in a hurry some excuse for my absence and presenting things through which I could have escaped facing the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. May be I could have asked my family and friends also to help me out of this predicament. (Scruples like these kept destabilizing my heart) until I heard that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had arrived. Then, all these confusing thoughts were blotted out of my heart and I realized that I could never escape his displeasure on grounds that are contaminated with a lie. Therefore, I resolved to tell him the truth for I was convinced that truth alone would rescue me (from this situation).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم entered Madīnah. The time was

Ḍuḥā (*Chasht* in Urdu and Persian), that is, middle of morning after sunrise. It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that he generally used to return from his journeys at this time and his practice was first to go to the Masjid, offer two *raka'āt* and then go to see Sayyidah Fāṭimah. After that, he went to meet his blessed wives.

This time too, as was his wont, he first went to the Masjid, offered two *raka'āt* and sat down in the Masjid. Some more than eighty hypocrites who had not gone to the expedition of Tabūk came to him offering false excuses on equally false oaths. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم accepted what was outwardly expressed through their statements on oath, approved of their allegiance, prayed for their forgiveness and entrusted what was in their hearts with Allah.

It was under this situation that I presented myself before him. When I offered my *salām* to him, he smiled, smiling like someone angry. Then he said, 'come.' So I walked towards him until I sat down before him.' According to some Ḥadīth reports, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم turned his face away from him. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ said: *Yā rasūlallāh*, why would you turn your face away from me? By God, I have nothing to do with hypocrisy, nor have I ever suffered from any doubt about my religion, nor am I guilty of making any alterations to it. 'Then he said, 'why then, did you not go for Jihād? Is it not that you had already bought a mount for this purpose?

I said, 'Yes, *Yā rasūlallāh*. If I would have been sitting before anyone from common worldly people, other than you, I am confident that I would have invented some excuse and avoided his displeasure – because, I have been gifted with the art of debate. But, I swear by Allah that I have understood perfectly well that, should I tell you a lie – that may even please you temporarily – still, the day would not be far when Allah Ta'ālā would tell you the whole truth and thus make you displeased with me. And if I were to tell you the truth – which may at this moment make you displeased with me – I hope, Allah Ta'ālā will forgive me. The truth of the matter is that I had no excuse for remaining absent from the Jihād for I had never been stronger, both financially and physically, as I was at that time.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'this man has told the truth.' Then, he said, 'all right, go – until Allah Ta'ālā gives His decree in your case.' I rose to leave when some men from the tribe of Banī

Salimah tailed me and started saying, 'As far as we know, you never committed a sin before this. Why did you act so dumb? You could have at the least come up with some excuse as was done by others who were left behind. Had you done that, the prayer made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been sufficient to bring forgiveness for your sins. By God, these people kept admonishing me repeatedly, so much so that a thought crossed my mind urging me to go back and say that I was wrong about what I had said earlier and that I had the right excuse with me.

But, it occurred to me that I should not add another sin to the one I have done before. I have already committed a sin when I remained behind in the Jihād. How could I venture into another sin, that of lying? Then, I asked those people if there was anyone like me who had confessed to his misconduct. They told me that there were two others who had done what I did and they too were given the same reply as was given to me (that they should wait for the decree of Allah). I asked them as to who those two were. They told me that one of them was Murarah ibn Rabī' al-"Umariy while the other, Hilāl ibn Umayyah al-Wāqifiy.'

According to a report carried by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the reason why the first of the two (that is, Murarah) was left behind is that he had a date farm where the fruit was ripening. He said to himself, 'you have taken part in many battles before this. If you do not go for Jihād this year, how would that become a crime?' Later, when he was alerted to his sinful thought, he promised to Allah that he has given this date farm in the way of Allah as a *ṣadaqah* from him.

As for the other gentleman, Sayyidnā Hilāl ibn 'Umayyah رضی اللہ عنہ, his family has been living scattered since long. At that time, they had assembled all together. He thought of not going to Jihād that year and spending some time with his family. He too, when reminded of his sin, promised that he would stay away from his family from that time onwards.

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'these people mentioned two blessed souls who were from among the *mujāhidīn* of the battle of Badr. I said, 'that is it. What these two did is worth following for me.' Saying this, I went home.

On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prohibited his Companions from greeting or talking to the three of us. As for us, we loved all Muslims as usual, but they were the ones who had turned away from us.'

It appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaibah that 'now we were in a condition that we would go to people, but they would not talk to us, nor greet us, nor respond to our greetings.'

Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq reports the statement of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه as follows: 'what a time that was when the small world around us had changed totally. It seemed as if the people who used to be there are not there any more, nor our fruit farms, nor our homes, none of these were what they used to be. Everything looked strange. I became seriously concerned about myself. If I die in this state of mine, I thought, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not say the Ṣalāh of Janāzah (funeral prayer) for me. Or, if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were to breath his last during this period, I shall be running around just like this all my life, condemned and disgraced before everyone. For this reason, as far as I was concerned, the whole Earth started appearing indifferent and desolate. So, we lived like that for fifty nights. At that time, the two companions of mine (Murārah and Hilāl) lost heart, sat home and wept. But, I was younger. I went out, walked around and made my Ṣalāh in the Masjid with other Muslims and roamed in the bazaars but nobody would talk to me nor respond to my *salām* greetings. I used to attend the customary sitting of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the Ṣalāh was over. When I said my *salām* to him, I tried to figure out whether or not the blessed lips of the Holy Prophet moved to respond to my *salām*. Then I tried to offer my Ṣalāh just about close to him from where I would steal a glance towards him and discover that he looks at me when I get busy with my Ṣalāh, and when I look towards him, he turns his face away.

When this (considered) indifference of these people dragged longer, I went to my cousin Abū Qatādah who was the dearest of my friends. I jumped a wall to enter his farm and said my *salām* to him. By God, he too did not respond to my *salām*. I asked, 'O Abū Qatādah, do you not know that I love Allah Ta'ālā and His *rasūl*?' Even then, Abū Qatādah observed silence. He did not respond. When I repeated my question again and again, then – probably, the third or the fourth time – he

only said, 'Allah and His *rasūl* know best.' I broke into tears and came out of the farm jumping over the compound wall as I had done earlier. During those days, once I was walking through a bazaar of Madīnah when, all of a sudden, I noticed a farmer from Syria who had come to Madīnah to sell grains. I saw him asking people if anyone there could tell him the address of Ka'b ibn Mālik? When they saw me right there, they pointed out to me. The man came to me and gave me a letter from the king of Ghassān that was written on a silk handkerchief. It said:

> ' After salutations, I have come to know that your Prophet has betrayed you and that he has made you stay away from him. (I assure you) God has not chosen to put you in a place of disgrace and destruction. If you like to come to us, come. We shall help you.'

When I read this letter, I said to myself, 'here comes another test and trial for me when, of all the people, the partisans of disbelief (*kufr*) have now been tempted to expect such things from me (that I go and join them)!' Taking this letter in my hands, I stepped forward. There was a bread-baking shop with a heated oven. I threw the letter down into it.

Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه says, 'when forty out of the fifty nights had passed, I was given a surprise by Khuzaymah ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه, a message bearer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who came towards me and said, 'the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has ordered that you should stay apart from your wife as well.' I said, 'should I divorce her? Or, do what?' He told me, 'no, just do not go near her.' The same order was communicated to my two companions also. I told my wife, 'go to the home of your parents and stay there till Allah Ta'ālā opens a way for us.'

After having heard this order, Khawlah bint 'Āṣim, the wife of Hilāl ibn Umayyah came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the plea that Hilāl ibn Umayyah was old and weak and that he had no servant to look after him. It also appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaybah that she also said, 'he is weak-sighted as well. Would you not like to allow me to continue serving him?' He said, 'serving him is no problem, however, he should not seek to be near you.' She said, 'as for that, He is in to a state wherein he has no such desire – and, by God, he keeps weeping day and night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālik says, 'some of my relatives and friends suggested to me too that I should also ask the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to allow me to keep my wife with me – similar to the permission he has given to Hilāl. I said, 'I will not do that. Who knows what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would say in reply? In addition to that, I am young (that is, living with one's wife was against precaution).' In this condition, I passed ten more nights until the count of fifty nights became complete.' The narrative of Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq says, 'At that stage, the Divine decree about our Taubah (repentance) was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the hour when one third of the night had passed. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Umm Salamah who was there at that time said, 'If you wish, Ka'b ibn Mālik can be informed about it right now.' He said, 'That will bring a crowd of people here right now. It would become impossible to sleep for the rest of the night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālik says, 'when the fiftieth night passed, I made my Fajr Ṣalāh and went to the roof. While I sat there my condition was a mirror of what Allah Ta'ālā has said in the Qur'ān – that the Earth was straitened for me despite all its vastness, and my own soul was straitened for me. (118) All of a sudden came the voice of a caller calling from the heights of the hill of Sal' loudly announcing: 'O Ka'b ibn Mālik, 'Be happy with the good news'.

In a report from Muḥammad ibn 'Amr, it is said that the caller was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه who went up the hill of Sal' to announce that Allah Ta'ālā had accepted the Taubah of Ka'b and offered congratulations for his success. And narration of 'Uqbah says that two men ran to give this good news to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه. When one ran ahead of the other, the one who had remained behind turned, climbed the hill of Sal', and announced the good news from there. It is said that the blessed souls who ran in that manner were Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين .

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه says, 'Hearing this voice, I fell down prostrating in Sajdah. So happy was I that I broke into tears. I had learnt that my good days have come back. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told the Ṣaḥābah after the Ṣalāh of Fajr that our Taubah was accepted. Everyone ran out to congratulate the three of us. Some of them rode on horses to reach me. But, the voice of the person calling

from the hill was quicker than the horse.

When I came out to present myself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting there. There was a cordon of his Ṣaḥābah around him. When Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubaidullāh saw me, he was the first to rise and rush towards me. Shaking my hands, he congratulated me for the acceptance of my Taubah. I cannot forget the good Ṭalḥah did to me on that day. When I said my *salām* to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his blessed face was radiant with delight. He said, 'O Ka'b, I congratulate you for this day of bliss for you, the best day of your life since you were born.' I said, '*Yā rasūlallāh*, is this order from you or is it from Allah Ta'ālā?' 'No,' he said, 'this order is from Allah Ta'ālā. You had told the truth. Allah Ta'ālā made your truthfulness come out in the open.'

When I sat down before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I said to him, '*Yā rasūlallāh*, I wish to walk out of all my wealth and property and give it as *ṣadaqah* in the way of Allah. This will be a part of my Taubah.' 'No,' he said, 'hold some of it for your needs. This is better.' I said, 'all right, can I give half of it as *ṣadaqah*?' He rejected that too. Then, I asked his permission to give one-third of it. This he accepted. I said, '*Yā rasūlallāh*, I have been delivered from my predicament by Allah because I told the truth, therefore, I pledge before you that, as long as I live, I shall not say anything but the truth.' Then, says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ, 'since the time I had given this pledge to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, *al-ḥamdulillāh*, no word of lie was uttered by me up to this day – and I hope Allah Ta'ālā shall protect me from it for the rest of my life.' Sayyidnā Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ also says, 'By God, after the blessing of Islām, I cannot think of having received a blessing greater than this. I mean that I told the truth before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that I did not lie – because, had I lied, I would have been ruined like those who took false oaths. About them the Qur'ān said: سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ (They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeeds – 95) up to فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضٰى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people – 96).

It has been said that the continuation of the boycott of these three gentlemen was, perhaps, based on the wisdom that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had spent exactly fifty days during the expedition of Tabūk. (The entire narration of this Ḥadīth and the related event has been taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Points of Guidance from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik

The clarity and detail with which Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه has described his story contains many elements of guidance for Muslims. Therefore, this Ḥadīth has been presented here in full. These are as follows:

1. This Ḥadīth tells us that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his usual battle plans that he would march out of Madīnah in a (feigned) direction that was opposite to the direction he was to go actually. The objective was to keep enemies of Islām in the dark about where to and against whom he was going to carry out his Jihād. This is what he defined as: اَلْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ (*al-ḥarbu khuda'ah*) that is, 'in war, deception is permissible.' Some people fall in doubt about the drift of this statement. They think that deceiving the adversary by lying in war or Jihād is permissible. This is not correct. In fact, it means the kind of deception whereby one acts in a manner that succeeds in deceiving enemies. For instance, marching out for Jihād from the opposite direction does not mean deceiving by lying blandly – something not permissible even in war. Similarly, it should also be understood that this practical deception, which has been declared permissible, has no bearing on abiding by a pledge or treaty. Breaking of a pledge or treaty, whether in peace or war, is not permissible under any situation.

2. For his journeys, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم liked a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

3. Telling a lie to please some elder or spiritual guide or teacher or father is neither permissible nor does it end well. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he was informed of the truth through revelation, therefore, the ultimate outcome of lying was evil – as clarified through the event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه and to others who remained behind. After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no saint or savant or pious elder or spiritual guide can claim to be a recipient of revelation. Then, getting to know things through inspiration (*ilhām*) and illumination (*kashf*) is not necessary either. But, experience shows that lying has an aura of evil about it, something that brings bad consequences in its wake. Causes converge naturally, so much so that this respected elder ultimately becomes displeased with the liar.

4. From this event we learn that the Amīr (the executive head) of

Muslims also has the right to order them to stop greeting and talking to someone as a punishment for some sinful misconduct of his – as it happened with these three gentlemen in the event concerned.

5. This event is a mirror of the love his Companions had for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The depth and extent of this love compelled them to continue staying in his company even during the days when he was displeased with them and they were subjected to a social boycott by the Companions who would neither greet, nor acknowledge greetings nor talk to them. A careful reader through the narration of the event would hardly miss their affection and concern for him particularly when they would look at their master with the corners of their eyes and try to assess the warmth of his attention and the emotional level of the bond between them. They were really tuned to him under all circumstances.

6. As for the attitude of Sayyidnā Abū Qatādah رضى الله عنه, cousin and friend of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, who did not respond to the later's *salām* nor talked to him, it is fairly obvious that he did not do so because of some enmity, hostility or malice. In fact, this was done for the sole reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had ordered him to do so and that he was duty-bound to follow it. This tells us that the law given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not only enforced on the physical exterior of people but was also implemented inwardly as well. The law ruled over their hearts. They would not do anything against it under any condition, present or absent – even if they had to act against the dearest of their friends and relatives.

7. The episode relating to the king of the Ghassān who wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه who threw it down into a heated oven shows how staunch as believers the Ṣaḥābah were. Here is one of them, terribly nervous about the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the boycott by fellow Muslims, yet the tempting offer made by a King fails to move his heart in that direction.

8. That Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar and other noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين ran to congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه as soon as they heard about the acceptance of his Taubah is significant. Let us keep in mind that they had avoided the social graces of greeting and talking before this happened. This shows that the love for Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه was very much present in their

hearts even during the days of the boycott – though, they had to surrender it in favor of carrying out the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When the 'Āyah of Taubah (the verse of repentance) was revealed, their deep mutual affection became manifest.

9. From the conduct of the noble Ṣaḥābah who went to disclose the good news to and congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, we learn that congratulating friends on a happy occasion has its basis in Sunnah.

10. When repenting from a sin, taking out a *ṣadaqah* from one's assets helps to do away with the effects of sin, but it is not good to give away the whole of it in charity. Giving more than one third of what one owns in *ṣadaqah* was not liked by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Advice to Muslims: Observe Taqwā and be with those true in word and deed

This brings us to the last verse: يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful – 119). The event of having remained behind as related to some otherwise sincere people, and the ultimate acceptance of their repentance, was all a result of their Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the sense of being responsible before him. Therefore, in this verse, the large masses of Muslims have been instructed to observe Taqwā (as a constant feature of their personal lives). Then, by saying: كُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ (be in the company of the truthful), it was hinted that the only way to achieve Taqwā was to frequent the company of those who are good in their deeds and true in their words, and to approximate one's own conduct to theirs. Perhaps, this may also be pointing out to the slip made by these people that was caused by the company they kept with hypocrites and their suggestions and advises they listened to. One should stay away from the company of those who are disobedient to Allah, and take to the company of the truthful. The Qur'ān has not said 'the learned' (*'ulamā'*) or 'the righteous' (*ṣulaḥā'*) at this place. Rather, by electing to use the word: الصدقين (*aṣ-ṣādiqīn*: the truthful), it has also told us about the real identity of the 'learned' and the 'righteous'. Such a truthful person has to be the one whose exterior and the interior are the same and who is also true in intention, and true in word, and true in deed as well.

Verses 120 – 121

مَا كَانَ لِاَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ اَنْ يَّتَخَلَّفُوْا

عَنْ رَّسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوْا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۗ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ
لَا يُصِيْبُهُمْ ظَمَاٌ وَّلَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا
يَطَـُٔوْنَ مَوْطِئًا يَّغِيْظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُوْنَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلًا اِلَّا
كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهٖ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ
﴿۱۲۰﴾ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً وَّلَا يَقْطَعُوْنَ
وَادِيًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾

It was not for the people of Madīnah and for those around them of the Bedouins to stay behind abandoning the Messenger of Allah, nor to prefer their own lives to his life. That is because whatever thirst or fatigue or hunger strikes them in the way of Allah, and whenever they step into a place which infuriates the infidels, and whenever they make a gain from an enemy, a virtuous deed is credited to their account. Surely, Allah does not destroy the reward of the virtuous. [120] **And whatever they spend, be it less or more, and whenever they cross a valley, is all written down for them, so that Allah may give them the best reward for what they used to do.** [121]

Commentary

The two verses cited above admonish those who missed to join the expedition of Tabūk for no valid reason. They have also been told that they did what was not proper. Then the verses describe the merits of people who take part in Jihād and tell us about the great rewards they get for everything they do there. Included here is the causing of hurt or loss to the enemy and the using of a strategy that infuriates the adversary. All these are good deeds, and worthy of *thawāb* (reward from Allah).

Verse 122

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَآفَّةً ۗ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ

مِّنۡهُمۡ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوۡا فِى الدِّيۡنِ وَلِيُنۡذِرُوۡا قَوۡمَهُمۡ اِذَا رَجَعُوۡۤا
اِلَيۡهِمۡ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَحۡذَرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾

And it is not for the believers to go forth all together. So, why should it not be that a group from every section of them goes forth, so that they may acquire perfect understanding of the Faith, and so that they may warn their people when they return to them, that they may be cautious. [122]

Commentary

It will be realized that the expedition of Tabūk has continued appearing as an important subject in Sūrah Al-Taubah. For this battle, a general call of Jihād was given asking all Muslims to participate in it. It was not permissible to contravene the order without a valid excuse. Those who did that were mostly hypocrites who have been mentioned in several verses appearing earlier. Then, some sincere Muslims had also remained behind due to their incidental laziness. Their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Obviously, from all these events it can be gathered that the going forth of all Muslims in every Jihād is *farḍ* (obligatory) and staying behind is *ḥarām* (unlawful) - although, this is not the religious law. In fact, Jihād during normal conditions is Farḍ al-Kifāyah, a collective obligation. It means that, should a number of Muslims sufficient for Jihād keeps engaged in Jihād, rest of the Muslims stand absolved of the obligation. However, if the number participating in Jihād turns out to be insufficient to the limits of being overpowered, it becomes obligatory on Muslims living nearby that they should come out to strengthen them and fight with them in the Jihād. If they too are not sufficient, the obligation falls on those near the later, and if they too are not sufficient, it falls on Muslims adjoining the later. This could reach the limit when, under such emergent conditions, Jihād becomes Farḍ 'Ain (absolute individual obligation) on Muslims of the whole world, and it will be *ḥarām* (unlawful) to avoid participating in *jihād*. Similarly, it could also become equally obligatory (*farḍ*) if the Amir of Muslims, seeing the need, gives a general call and invites Muslims to join the mission of Jihād. At that time too, participation in Jihād becomes obligatory (*farḍ*) and staying behind becomes *ḥarām* (unlawful) – as it happened in the expedition of Tabūk

due to the general call of Jihād given for it. The verse cited above clarifies that this order to join the Jihād of Tabūk was a specific order due to the general call for it. Under normal conditions, Jihād is not an individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain) that would require all Muslims to go forth in Jihād as a matter of obligation – because, like Jihād, there are other collective concerns and important undertakings of Islām and Muslims that are Farḍ al-Kifāyah, also like Jihād. To fulfill these responsibilities too, different groups of Muslims have to follow the principle of division of work. Therefore, all Muslims should not go forth in every Jihād. The submission here may also help you understand the reality of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The, areas of work that are not individual, but collective in nature, and the responsibility of carrying these out falls on all Muslims, are areas that the Sharī'ah of Islām has declared to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The purpose is that everything keeps being taken care of in its respective area and that all collective duties continue to be fulfilled. Duties such as washing, shrouding, offering Ṣalāh of Janāzah and burying deceased Muslims, the making and maintaining of mosques, Jihād and the guarding of Islāmic frontiers are all separate duties that are subject to the same rule of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. In other words, the responsibility of fulfilling these obligations though falls on the Muslims of the whole world as a matter of principle but, should some of them were to do that satisfactorily enough, other Muslims also stand absolved of the obligation. An important area of work that falls within the imperatives of this Farḍ al-Kifāyah is the religious education. That it is an obligation has been particularly mentioned in this verse by saying that this obligation should not be left out unattended even during the period of engagement in as important a duty as Jihād. The way in which it could be accomplished is that a smaller section from out of every large section sets forth for Jihād while the rest of people keep engaged in the pursuit of religious education. Then, those so educated should orient Muslims going on Jihād as well as teach and train others in their religion.

The obligation of acquiring religious knowledge, and its etiquette

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, 'this verse is the root and foundation of religious knowledge (the *'ilm* of *dīn*) for its seeker.' If looked at carefully, also given here is a brief curriculum (*niṣāb*) of religious education, as well as the duties of the person (*'ālim*) who has qualified as one who

has this knowledge. Therefore, this subject is being taken up in some details.

The merits (*faḍā'il*) of acquiring religious knowledge

Muslim scholars have written regular books on the merits of religious knowledge, great rewards (*thawāb*) it brings and aspects related with it. Some brief reports relevant to the occasion are being cited here. Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ who narrated that he heard the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم saying, 'whoever travels on a path for seeking knowledge (*'ilm* of *dīn*), Allah Ta'ālā will – in reward (*thawāb*) for his effort – turn the orientation of his path towards Paradise.'

A series of Ḥadīth narratives appearing in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī report that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

1. 'The angels of Allah spread out their wings for (welcoming) the seeker of knowledge;'

2. 'Allah's creatures in the heavens and the earth and fishes in the waters of the world pray for such seekers;'

3. 'The superiority of the 'Ālim over the person who devotes to voluntary acts of worship (*nafl 'ibadāt*) abundantly is like the superiority of the full moon over the rest of the stars;'

4. ''Ulamā' are the inheritors of the blessed prophets;'

5. 'The blessed prophets leave no gold and silver as inheritance, but they do leave the legacy of knowledge. So, whoever inherits this legacy of knowledge has inherited great wealth.'

Dārimī reports a Ḥadīth in his Musnad which says: 'Someone asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم: There were two men in Banī Isrā'īl. One was an 'Alim who would offer his prayers and then get busy teaching people their religion. The other fasted during the day and stood for prayers during the night. Of the two, who is superior? He said, "That 'Ālim (man of religious knowledge) is superior to the 'Ābid (man of religious worship) as I am superior to a very common person from among you." (Reported by Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his book, Jami'u Bayān al-'Ilm, from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ with relevant chain of narrators.) (Qurṭubī)

And the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'a *faqīh* (expert Muslim

jurist), when confronting Shaytān, is stronger than a thousand worshippers.' (Tirmidhī from Ibn 'Abbās – as in Maẓharī). Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said, 'when a person dies, his deeds come to an end – except three, the *thawāb* (reward) of which keeps reaching that person even after death. One: *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (act of charity the benefits of which continue) such as *masjid*, building for religious education or institutions of public welfare. Two: Knowledge through which people continue to benefit even later on. (For example, a student of religion became an 'Ālim who set in motion a chain of learning and teaching the knowledge of religion for future generations; or someone wrote a book from which people kept benefiting even after the author was gone). Three: Children who are good (in character and up-bringing) and who keep praying for parents and do things the reward (*thawāb*) of which continues to reach them.' (Qurṭubī)

Details of Individual and Collective Obligation in the Learning of Religion

Backed by sound authority, Ibn 'Adiyy and al-Baihaqī report from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيْضَةٌ عَلٰى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ (Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim). (Maẓharī). It is all too obvious that the sense of *'ilm* (knowledge) – as in this Ḥadīth, as well as in those quoted a little earlier – is nothing but the *'ilm* of *dīn* (the knowledge of religion). Granted that worldly arts and sciences may be necessary for one as a part of the material management of life on this earth, but their merits are not the same as mentioned in the Āḥadīth appearing above. Then, the *'ilm* of *dīn* (knowledge of religion) is not some solitary area of knowledge. It is a comprehensive system composed of many sciences. Then, it is also obvious that every Muslim man and woman does not have the capacity to acquire full mastery over all these sciences. Therefore, when the Ḥadīth speaks of 'knowledge being obligatory on every Muslim,' it means the particular part of the knowledge of religion without which one can neither fulfill his or her obligations, nor stay away from the *ḥarām* (unlawful things) – being principles that are inseparably necessary for 'Īmān and Islām. As for the rest of the sciences, we should keep in mind that there are many more details of explanations, elements of wisdom and issues culled from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth alone, not to mention the great range of injunctions and laws deduced from these sources. These are things beyond the capacity and control of every

Muslim, nor has this been made an individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain) for each one of them. However, this is Farḍ al-Kifāyah (collective obligation), and as such, it becomes the responsibility of the Islāmic world as a whole. The presence of one 'Ālim, a genuine expert in all these sciences and religious laws in every city makes the rest of Muslims absolved of this obligation. If a city or township has not even one 'Ālim, it becomes obligatory on the people of the city or township that they should arrange to make someone from among themselves an 'Ālim. If that is also not possible, they should invite one from outside, keep him in their city so that they can know, understand and act according to the *fatwā* of this scholar, specially when the need is acute and the problems are delicate. Therefore, given below are details of Farḍ al-'Ain and Farḍ al-Kifāyah as they relate to the *'ilm* of *dīn* (knowledge of religion):

Farḍ al-'Ain: Individual Obligation

It is obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman, to acquire the knowledge of:

1. Islām's correct and authentic 'Aqā'id (beliefs).

2. Rules of Ṭahārah (purity) and Najāsah (impurity).

3. Ṣalāh (prayers), Ṣawm (fasting) and all 'Ibadāt made *farḍ* (obligatory) or wājib (necessary) by the Sharī'ah.

4. Things declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible or repugnant).

5. The rulings and injunctions of Zakāh (prescribed alms) on the part of one who owns property or wealth above the fixed *niṣāb* or threshold.

6. The rulings and injunctions of Ḥajj on the part of one who has the capability of performing Ḥajj, for it is an individual obligation on him or her.

7. The rulings and injunctions of sale and lease (*bai'* and *ijārah*) on the part of one who has to buy and sell or run a business or industry or work on wages or salary, for it is his individual obligation to do that.

8. The rulings and injunctions of *nikāh* (marriage) when getting married – and of *ṭalāq* (divorce) as well.

In brief, there are things the Sharī'ah of Islām has made obligatory

or necessary on everyone. Acquiring the knowledge of the rules relating to these is also obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman.

Knowing about Spiritual Purification is also an Individual Obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain)

Everyone knows that the knowledge of the imperatives relating to one's outward acts like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm is Farḍ al-'Ain. However, Qāḍī Thanāullah Pānīpatī, the author of Tafsīr Maẓharī has written under his commentary on this verse that it is also *farḍ al-'ain* to acquire the knowledge of the imperatives and prohibition pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. This kind of knowledge is usually called the science of *Taṣawwuf*. Since these imperatives fall under the category of *farḍ al-'ain*, their knowledge too is *farḍ al-'ain*.

But, the field of knowledge called Taṣawwuf in our time has, become a potpourri of many fields of knowledge and insights, illuminations and sense experiences. What is meant by Farḍ al-'Ain at this place is nothing but that part of it which deals with the obligatory injunctions pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. For instance, there is the matter of true, correct and authentic 'Aqā'id (beliefs). These relate to man's inward state. Or, take the case of spiritual virtues like *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *tawakkul* (trust), *qanā'ah* (satisfaction with the available) and similar others. These are obligatory (*farḍ*) in a particular degree. Or take the case of spiritual vices like pride and arrogance, malice and rancor, miserliness and greed for the material and similar others. These are *ḥarām* (forbidden) on the authority of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. So, it is also obligatory (*farḍ*) on every Muslim, man and woman, that he and she must find out the reality behind these and learn the methods of acquiring virtues and avoiding what has been forbidden. (Irrespective of the claims made in the field of Taṣawwuf or in its counter-Islāmic versions of mysticism and its many derivations) the sole basis of Taṣawwuf is no more than what is Farḍ 'Ain (under Islāmic Law).

Farḍ al-Kifāyah

To comprehend why the *'Ilm* of *Dīn* (the full knowledge of religion) has been made Farḍ al-Kifāyah, it will be useful to glance through what it entails. For your convenience, the integrated whole appears in three parts as follows:

1. To understand the meanings and rulings of the entire Qur'ān,

2. To understand all Āḥadīth and to master the ability to sift and recognize the trustworthy from the untrustworthy,

3. To acquire a complete knowledge of all injunctions and rulings deduced from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah and a full awareness of the views of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the Mujtahid Imāms, expressed by them orally or practically.

Knowing all this is a monumental task which is not easy even after one devotes. Therefore, the Sharī'ah of Islām has declared this field of knowledge to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah, that is, if some people acquire all this knowledge to the extent of its need in community life, rest of Muslims shall stand absolved.

The curriculum of the 'Ilm of Dīn

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has used one single word to tell us about the essence of the knowledge or science of religion, and its curriculum as well. If the text had chosen to say something like: لِيَتَعَلَّمُوا الدِّيْنَ (that is, so that they acquire the knowledge of religion), it would have obviously suited the occasion. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has bypassed the word: تعلم (*ta'allum*: learning) and elected to go by the word: تفقہ (*tafaqquh*: understanding). This gives a clear indication that a simple reading of the *'ilm* of *dīn* is not enough. This is something many disbelievers, Jews and Christians also do. Then, Shayṭān is supposed to have it all, more than anyone. The fact of the matter is that the *'ilm* of *dīn* means 'to create an understanding of religion.' This is the exact translation of the word: تفقہ (*tafaqquh*) in the verse. A derivation from: فقہ (*fiqh*), which essentially means understanding and comprehension. At this point, it is worth noticing that the Holy Qur'ān has not even said: لِيَفْقَهُوا الدِّيْنَ (*liyafqahud-dīn*: so that they understand the religion) by employing the verb from the simple (bare, denuded) form. Instead, the Qur'ān has said: لِيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِى الدِّيْنِ (*liyatafaqqahū fi 'd-dīn*: so that they may acquire a perfect understanding of the Faith). Being from '*bāb al tafa''ul* (باب تفعل), it has the added sense of exertion and striving in its pursuit. Thus, the drive of the meaning is that they should, while trying to create a perfect understanding of religion, acquire the maximum possible expertise through continuous striving, hard work and endurance. Then, it is also evident that the kind of understanding of religion we are talking about does not materialize by finding out the problems and solutions concerning purity, impurity, prayers, fasting,

Zakāh and Ḥajj. In fact, the understanding of religion means that one understands that he or she will have to account for every word, deed, movement and rest in the Hereafter, and that how should he or she live in this world (in view of that). The perfect understanding of religion is really the name of this concern. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah defines *fiqh* (understanding) by saying, 'that one understands everything the doing of which is necessary for him or her, and also understands everything abstaining from which is necessary for him or her.' As for the current definition of 'Ilmu 'l-Fiqh as a religious science that deals with its subsidiary problems and rulings, it is a later day terminology. The reality of Fiqh as it appears in Qur'ān and Sunnah is no more than what the great Imām has stated: 'a person who has read through all books of religion but did not acquire this understanding is not an 'Ālim in the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah.' So, the gist of the investigation made here tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, the sense of acquiring the knowledge of religion is to acquire its understanding, regardless of sources employed in such acquisition. These may be books or the company of teachers. They all form part of the curriculum.

The essential duty of an 'Ālim after he acquires the knowledge of Dīn

This too the Holy Qur'ān has put in one single sentence: لِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ : "so that they may warn their people (against the disobedience of Allah)." At this place as well, it is worth attention that the sentence has identified 'the warning of a people' as a duty of the 'Ālim. The Arabic word: انذار (*indhār*) is usually translated into English as warning in the sense of putting the fear of something into someone, though it still does not convey the ultimate sense in full. The truth of the matter is that such warning or putting the fear of what must be avoided can take many forms. For instance, one may warn against an enemy, thief, robber or some beast or poisonous creeper. Then, there is the kind of warning a father would give, out of his affection and concern for his children, against things that hurt, like the fire, poisonous insects and unhealthy food. This is based on love, and on the desire to protect which has a special tone and temper, totally different from the former. Indhār is the name of warning given in that manner and with that motive. Therefore, prophets and messengers of Allah have been given the title of نذير (*nadhīr*: warner) and this duty of warning people assigned to

the 'Alim is really nothing but a part of the legacy left by prophets which, according to the binding authority of Ḥadīth, the 'Ālim inherits.

At this point, we may also wish to consider that the blessed prophets are known by two appellations: Bashīr and Nadhīr. You already know the meaning of *nadhīr* (warner) from the preceding discussion. Bashīr means one who gives *bashārah*, that is, good news or glad tidings. It is a part of the mission of blessed prophets that they give glad tidings to those who act righteously. Though, at this place too, what has been mentioned is Indhār or warning explicitly, yet, other textual imperatives show that it is also the duty of an 'Ālim that he should give good news of rewards too for those who do good deeds. Now that the mention of *indhār* (warning) has been considered sufficient at this place has its reason. Actually, it indicates that man is charged with two things. One: that he elects to do what is beneficial for him in this world and in the world to come. Two: that he avoids doing things likely to bring harm to him. People of learning and people of wisdom both agree that the later of the two has the higher priority. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as 'bringing benefit' and 'repelling harm' and the latter has been given precedence to the former. In addition to that, when harm is repelled, it serves the purpose of bringing benefit in its own way, because if someone abandons what is beneficial and necessary for him, it brings harm. Given this situation, whoever makes the effort to stay safe from the harmful effects of bad deeds will also make the effort to stay away from leaving off what one must do necessarily.

From here we also learn the main reason why religious sermons and acts of *da'wah* generally remain ineffective in our time. We have seen a glimpse of the cardinal etiquette of *indhār* or warning, as given above. Contemporary sermons and acts of *da'wah* seem to miss the manners, something that would exude care, concern, attachment, mercy and the earnest wish to give out what is really good for the listeners, not only in words but through the style of address and the empathy of tone and diction as well. It would be wonderful if the addressee comes to believe that the things the speaker is saying do not aim at disgracing him or settling scores against him, in fact, this person is telling me what he thinks is good and beneficial for me just out of love. If the *tablīgh* we do today or the *da'wah* we carry to correct people who

violate commandments of the Sharī'ah were to adopt this pattern of behavior, it is absolutely certain that it will bring forth at least one immediate response: the addressees will not be apprehensive, irritated, dogmatic or obstinate about our submission. They would not worry about confronting us. Everyone would, rather, become attuned to himself and start sorting out his own doings and thinking about what was going to happen to him. And if this effort continues, the time is to come, sooner or later, when such a person will be even willing to accept what had been presented before him. The second outcome of this attitude is that it will not, at least, generate mutual hatred and altercation, something which holds contemporary Muslims in its grips.

In the end, by saying: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ (that they may be cautious), it was also indicated that the duty of an 'Ālim was not simply limited to putting the fear of Allah's punishment in the hearts of people. Instead, he also has to watch and assess the extent and measure of the effect generated by his *tablīgh* and *da'wah*. May be it did not work the first time. If so, let him do it again and again, until he sees its result: "يَحْذَرُوْنَ" with his own eyes, which means that his people have become cautious and have started staying away from sins. Allah knows best.

Verses 123 - 127

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَكُمْ مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ
وَلْيَجِدُوْا فِيْكُمْ غِلْظَةً ؕ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾
وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ اَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هٰذِهٖٓ
اِيْمَانًا ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَزَادَتْهُمْ اِيْمَانًا وَّهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٤﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا اِلٰى
رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ اَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُوْنَ
فِيْ كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً اَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٦﴾ وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ هَلْ
يَرٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوْا ؕ صَرَفَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you, and let them find severity in you. And be sure that Allah is with the God-fearing. [123]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, some of them say, "Who among you has been increased in faith by it?" As for those who believe, they have been increased in faith by it, and they are quite happy. [124]

But those who have malady in their hearts are increased by it in impurity in addition to their own impurity, and they die infidels. [125]

Do they not see that they are put to trial every year once or twice, still they do not repent, nor do they take lesson? [126]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, they look at each other (as if saying): "Is there someone watching you?" Then they slip off. Allah has turned their hearts, because they are a people who do not understand. [127]

Commentary

Previous verses carried inducement to Jihād. The first verse from the present ones (123) which opens with the words: يَآَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَاتِلُوا (O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you) gives details, for disbelievers are spread out all over the world and any confrontation with them has to have some sort of functional sequence. The verse says that Jihād should first be waged against those of the disbelievers who were near. 'Being near' could be taken in terms of the place, that is, the disbelievers who live closer to home base should be fought against first. And it could also be understood in terms of relationship, that is, those who are near in kinship, parentage and other social bonds should be given precedence. This is because Islāmic Jihād is essentially carried out in their interest and for their well being, therefore, when it comes to care and concern, kinsfolk have precedence – similar to the command given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: وَاَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ (And warn your near relatives against the punishment of Allah – 26:214). He carried out the command by assembling people from his family and conveyed to them the Word of Allah as revealed to him. The circle then became larger. Keeping the same principle of near and far, confronted first, as compared to others, were disbelievers who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah, such as Banū Qurayẓah, Banū Nadīr and the people of Khaibar. After that came the fight against the rest

within the Arabian Peninsula. And after things were settled there, came the last command to fight the disbelievers of Byzantium that resulted in the expedition of Tabūk.

In the second sentence of verse 123: وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً (and let them find severity in you), the word: غلظة (*ghilẓah*) means severity or toughness. The sense is that the disbelievers must be confronted in a manner that would not allow them to take their adversary to be weak.

The sentence: فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا (they have been increased in faith by it) in verse 124 tells us that the reciting the verses of the Qur'ān, pondering over them, and acting in accordance with their dictates makes one advance in faith. One feels changes for the better, the higher. When 'Īmān increases, so does its light and sweetness. Once in this blissful state, one starts seeing obedience to Allah and His Rasūl as easy. 'Ibādah becomes inviting. One can feel the very taste of it. Sins pose no problems, for one starts hating sins by his own nature. They tempt no more. In fact, they irritate and vex.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has said, 'when 'Īmān enters the heart, it is like a radiant dot. As 'Īmān increases, its radiance increases, until the whole heart becomes blissfully radiant. Similarly, disbelief and hypocrisy start appearing on the heart first as a black dot. Then, with every increase in sin and disbelief, the dot keeps increasing in size until the whole heart turns black.' (Maẓharī). For this reason, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to tell each other, 'let us sit together for a while and remind each other of things relating to our *dīn* and '*ākhirah* so that it increases our 'Īmān.'

In verse 126: يُفْتَنُونَ فِى كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ (they are put to trial every year once or twice), hypocrites have been warned about their incorrigible hypocrisy and constant breach of trust which brought all sorts of troubles for them every year once or twice. They saw the defeat of their disbelieving accomplices, the *kuffār* of Makkah. Then, they had to face the disgrace brought upon them when their hypocrisy was exposed. So, there was no dearth of warning signals for them. Incidentally, the count of 'once' or 'twice' here does not signify the numbers one and two as such. In fact, the purpose is to stress that this chain of action and reaction keeps moving all the time yet they take no lesson from what happens to them.

Verses 128 - 129

لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ
عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ
حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ
الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۱۲۹﴾

Surely, there has come to you a Messenger from amongst you, hard on whom is your suffering, for the good of you he craves and for believers he is kind, merciful. [128]

So, if they turn away, say, "Enough for me is Allah. There is no god but He. In Him I have placed my trust, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne." [129]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been declared that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is very kind and merciful for the entire creation of Allah, particularly so for Muslims. Then, in the last verse, he has been told that he should observe patience and trust Allah even if there are people who do not come to believe despite all his efforts.

That this theme appears at the end of Sūrah Al-Taubah happens to be very appropriate. It will be recalled that this Sūrah has been full of references to the declaration of withdrawal from the disbelievers, the ultimate severance of relationship with them and then fighting in Jihād against them. This is, however, the last resort of the Call to Allah subject to the condition that the initial steps of Da'wah (call) and Tablīgh (communication of the Message) leave no hope of correction and betterment. But, the basic function of the prophets is to invite people to the way of Allah with love, affection, sympathy and an earnest desire for their well-being; if they have to face aversion from the people or have to suffer some hardships, they are supposed to leave it to Allah and place their trust in Him, for He is the Lord of the Great Throne. By saying the Rabb or Lord of the Great 'Arsh, the purpose is to lay stress on the fact that He encompasses the entire creation.

The last two verses, according to Sayyidnā 'Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضى الله

عنه, are the last verses of the Qur'ān. After these no other verse was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left the mortal world. This is also the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه . (Qurṭubī)

Great merits of these two verses appear in Ḥadīth. Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says, 'One who recites these verses three times, morning and evening, shall find that Allah Ta'ālā makes things easy for him (Qurṭubī)' Allah knows best.

The Commentary

On

Sūrah Al-Taubah

Ends here.

Sūrah Yūnus

(Jonah)

Sūrah Yūnus is Makkī and it has 109 Verses and 11 Sections

Verses 1 – 4

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All Merciful

الٓرٰ قف تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿۱﴾ اَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا اَنْ
اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ اَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنَّ
لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ قَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ
﴿۲﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ
اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ؕ مَا مِنْ شَفِيْعٍ اِلَّا مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ اِلَيْهِ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ؕ اِنَّهٗ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ
لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّعَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. **These are verses of the Wise Book.** [1] **Is it surprising for people that We have revealed to a man from among them (saying): "Warn the people and give happy news to those who believe that they will have a perfect place with their Lord."? The disbelievers said, "Surely, he is an open sorcerer."** [2]

Surely, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He took a straight position on the Throne. He manages all matters. There is no intercessor except after His permission. That is Allah, your Lord. So, worship Him. Would you still pay no heed? [3]

Towards Him is the return of you all - a real promise from Allah. Surely, He originates the creation, then He will bring it again so that He may reward those who believe and do good deeds, with justice. As for those who disbelieve, for them there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment because they used to disbelieve. [4]

Commentary

Sūrah Yūnus is among the Makkī Sūrahs. Three of its verses revealed after the Hijrah to Madīnah have been called Madanī.

In this Sūrah too, the proof of the basic objectives of Qur'ān, and Islam, such as the Oneness of Allah, the mission of His Messenger and the inevitability of the Hereafter, has been provided. Since it has been presented in the background of the universe of our experience and observation, it becomes easy to comprehend. Along with it, some lesson-oriented historical accounts and stories have been introduced to warn people who do not pay heed to the open signs of Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary, the text refutes *shirk* whereby heedless people start ascribing partners to the pristine divinity of Allah – and also answers some related doubts. This is a gist of the subjects taken up in the Sūrah. A careful look at these will help us understand the interconnection between the previous Sūrah, Al-Taubah, and the present one. Sūrah Al-Taubah was making a strong statement when it opted for breaking through the powerful cordon of *kufr* and *shirk* to achieve the same objectives through material means by waging Jihād against deniers and disbelievers. And since the present Sūrah was revealed in Makkah before the injunctions of Jihād came, these objectives have been explained and proved only by arguments and evidences very much in accordance with the law of the Makkan period.

The Sūrah opens with the letters: Alif, Lām, Rā (الٓر). Known as 'isolated letters.' Many Sūrahs of the Qur'ān begin with these. Debates on investigations made into the meaning of letter combinations like الٓمٓ

(*Alif, Lām, Mīm*), حٰمٓ (*Hā, Mīm*) and عٓسٓقٓ (*'Ain, Sīn, Qāf*) by commentators are lengthy. But, we also have the authentic verdict of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the righteous elders of the community (*salaf*) about these 'isolated letters.' According to them, these are secret symbols or signs. In all likelihood, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was confided with their meaning but he elected to disclose to his community only those areas of knowledge and insight which their minds could bear by and which, if remained unknown, would impede the normal living of his people. Nothing that Muslims must do is dependent upon knowing the secrets of such 'isolated letters,' nor do they have to miss anything by not knowing them. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ too did not tell his community about their meaning as being unnecessary for them. Therefore, we too should not go about digging into it – because, it is certain that had the knowing of their meaning been expedient for us, our master, who was mercy personified for the whole world ﷺ, would have never hesitated in telling us about it.

In the first verse: تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ (These are verses of the Wise Book), the word: تِلْكَ (*tilka*: these) points out to the '*āyāt* of this Sūrah which follow. 'The Book' refers to the Qur'ān. To describe its attribute, the Qur'ān has used the word: حَكِيْم (*ḥakīm*) at this place. It means the Book of Wisdom.

The second verse refers to a doubt expressed by the Mushriks, and provides its answer. In a nutshell, these people had, out of their ignorance, somehow decided that a Messenger or Prophet who comes from Allah Ta'ālā should not be a human being (*al-bashar*), instead, he should be an angel. The Qur'ān has refuted this absurd idea of theirs on several occasions from different angles. In one such verse, it was said: قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُوْلًا (Say, "Had there been angels walking in peace on the Earth, We would have certainly sent to them from the heavens an angel–messenger!" – 17:95). In sum, the mission of a messenger cannot be accomplished unless there is a mutual homogeneity between this messenger and those to whom he is sent. Angels are homogenous to angels and human beings to human beings. If the purpose is to send a messenger for human beings, only a human being has to be made a messenger.

The same subject has been taken up in this verse in a different manner. The text sees no reason why would people wonder that a hu-

man being was made a messenger? Why was a human being entrusted with the mission of warning the disobedient ones against the punishment of Allah? Why was the task of heralding the good news of His rewards to the obedient ones assigned again to a human being? This kind of wondering deserves a counter-wonder, for sending a human messenger to the human race is perfect commonsense.

Good news to believers has been given in this verse by saying: أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ (that they will have a perfect place with their Lord). The initial meaning of the word: قدم (*qadam*) used here is 'step' as in English. Since '*qadam*' is the medium of a person's effort, and advancement in its wake, therefore, a higher rank is called a '*qadam*' in a figurative sense. Then, by attributing '*qadam*' (high rank, place of honor) to صدق '*ṣidq*' (perfect as being true, certain, abiding, everlasting), it was emphasized that the high rank they were to get was real, certain, established, abiding and everlasting. This was not something like the ranks and offices of the mortal world. To begin with, it is never certain that one would get these at all. If, as a result of some extra effort, one does get one of these, their continuity cannot be certain. In fact, what is certain is that these will vanish in time. Sometimes, this could happen within one's lifetime. But, when comes the time to die, one goes empty-handed. All ranks, offices, blessings remain behind. So, the word: صدق (*ṣidq*) includes the sense of certainty, and also that of being perfect and everlasting in it. Therefore, the sentence means: O Prophet, give believers the good news that they will have a perfect place with their Lord, an asset that is certain and lasting.

Some commentators have said: Through the introduction of the word *ṣidq* at this place, an indication has been given that these high ranks can be achieved only through truth and absolute sincerity. Mere verbal claims of having faith and a formal recital of the *Kalimah* of *'Īmān* is not enough, until one embraces the faith, truly and duly, verbally and emotionally and intellectually. It will invariably result in adherence to good deeds and avoidance of the evil ones.

In the third verse, the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) has been proved through the undeniable reality that there is no associate or partner to Allah Ta'ālā when it comes to the creation of the heavens and the earth and then to the management and operation of this entire universal system. When this reality stands established, how could someone

else be made an associate or partner in His pristine Divinity or in worship for Him and in obedience to Him? In fact, doing so is the highest conceivable injustice.

It was said in this verse that Allah Ta'ālā has created the heavens and the earth in six days. But, the day as we know it denotes the time from sunrise to sunset – and it is obvious that the sun did not exist before the creation of the heavens, earth and stars. How then could sunrise and sunset be calculated? Therefore, intended here is the measure of time utilized in between sunrise and sunset.

Making this huge world composed of the heavens, the Earth, the planets and the universe as a whole, ready and functional (a virtual turn-key job, so to say), can only be attributed to the Being who is the purest of the pure and exercises power that is absolute. When He intends to create, He needs no raw materials in advance or any staff to assist. Such is the station and degree of His perfect power that He, as and when He intends to create what He wills, creates instantly, without any raw materials or personnel or technical support. The time duration of these six days has only been chosen in consideration of His particular wisdom. Otherwise, it was also within His power that He could have created the heavens and the Earth and what it contained in a single instant.

After that it was said: ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (then He took a straight position on the Throne). That which stands proved from the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is that the *'Arsh* (Throne) of the *Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful Allah) is some created object which encompasses the entire heavens and the Earth and the whole universe thereof. Thus, seen conversely, all that there is fits into the room inside it. Knowing anymore about its reality is beyond any human effort. No doubt, scientific knowledge in our time is at its zenith. Man is getting ready to reach planets comparatively nearer with mixed measures of success. However, scientists still confess that the distant planets are so far away from us that information about these through available instrumentation cannot be relied upon as a mirror of reality. Then, there are stars in the firmament even light from where has not yet reached our Earth – even though, as we know, the speed of light is 1, 86, 000 miles per second. When this is the graph of human limitations in scaling planets and stars, how could human efforts to find out what we know as the heav-

ens farther and higher from stars and planets be taken as credible (or even reasonable). And finally, what is believed to be the *'Arsh* of the *Raḥmān* - encompassing all there is, even above what is termed as the seventh heaven - is a reality seeking access to which through technical ingenuity needs no comment.

So, up to this point, the third verse has told us that Allah Ta'ālā created the heavens and the earth and the whole system of the universe in six days, and 'after that He took a position on the Throne'. (The last sentence is a word arrangement in English for the words of the text: ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ [*thumma 's-tawā 'ala 'l-'arsh*] which should be understood in the light of the comments appearing below).

This is certain, and evident enough that Allah, the high and the true, is above and beyond the human concepts of body and mass and of all attributes and characteristics they may have. Neither does His existence relate to any direction or form, nor is His stay in a place like the staying of the things of the world where they belong. Now then, how are we to explain the nature, mode or manner of His staying, establishing or positioning on the *'Arsh* or Throne? This can be explained only by saying that these are from what is called '*mutashābihāt*' (statements of hidden meaning) in the terminology of Qur'ān, a phenomena that cannot be comprehended by human reason. Therefore, about it, says the Qur'ān: وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَالرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ (no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those [who are] well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe therein; - 3: 7) – and just do not bother to go digging out its reality. Therefore, there is a standard approach in all such matters where the attribution of Allah Ta'ālā has been made to a place or form, or where words, such as hand, face and shank, have appeared in the Qur'ān for Allah Ta'ālā. The *'Aqīdah* (belief) of the majority of the *'Ulamā* of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one believes these words to be true in their place, and believes what Allah Ta'ālā means by them is correct, and believes that the concern to know about its nature and reality should be set aside as being beyond one's ability to comprehend it.

As for the later day 'Ulamā who have suggested some meanings to these things, they have done it only in a degree of probability, even in their own sight. They simply suggest – perhaps, it may mean this. They never say that the meanings they have given are certain. As ob-

vious, probabilities disclose no reality. Therefore, the only simple and straight creed (*maslak*) is that of the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions), the *Tābi'īn* (Successors to Companions) and the *Salaf* (the righteous and worthy forebears and elders of the Faith). They were satisfied to live with the approach of entrusting the reality of such matters with Divine Knowledge.

This brings us to the next statement: يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ (He manages all matters). It means that, positioned on the Throne, He Himself manages all universes by virtue of His power. Then, comes the succeeding sentence: مَا مِنْ شَفِيْعٍ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ translated as: 'There is no intercessor except after His permission.' It tells us that such is the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā that even a Prophet and Messenger cannot intercede on behalf of anyone, on their own, before Him – unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself grants them the permission to intercede, without which even they could not do that.

The fourth verse describes the *'Aqīdah* of *'Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter): اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا (Towards Him is the return of you all). The announcement is asserted by saying: وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا (a real [and true] promise from Allah). That it must be as promised has been explained through the simple logic of: اِنَّهٗ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ (Surely, He originates the creation, then He will bring it again). The sentence is telling us that there is nothing surprising about it and that there is no sense in worrying about as to how this entire universe would start pulsating with life after it has been eliminated. The reason is that the Sacred Power who has the mastery to create something the first time, without any pre-existing matter and without any prototype of form and shape, should hardly find any difficulty in creating once again everything He had made then unmade.

Verses 5 – 6

هُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَّالْقَمَرَ نُوْرًا وَّقَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ
لِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ ؕ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ اِلَّا
بِالْحَقِّ ۚ يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ اِنَّ فِى اخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ
وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ

يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾

He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light, and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of the years, and the calculation (of time). Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand. [5]

Surely, in the alternation of night and day and in what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who are God-fearing. [6]

Commentary

These two verses mention some signs openly visible in the universe of our experience. They are evidences of the perfect power and eloquent wisdom of the most exalted Allah. They prove that the Lord Almighty is fully capable of bringing about the end of this universe, reducing it to particles, then reassembling the particles and bringing everything back to life, all anew, making everyone account for one's deeds and get punishment or reward as enforced. And when He does that, it will be nothing but reasonable and wise. Thus, these two verses are an extension of what was said briefly in verse 3. Mentioned there was the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the positioning on the Throne and the management of matters. The later proved that He did not, after having created the universe, abandon it to survive on its own, instead, He manages, directs and controls everything, all the time, every moment.

The opening statement of verse 5: هُوَالَّذِىْ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَّالْقَمَرَ نُوْرًا (He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light) is a part of this very system and its management. Both words: ضياء (*ḍiyā'*) and نور (*nūr*) mean glow and light, therefore, many master lexicographers have taken these as synonyms. 'Allamah al-Zamakhshari, al-Ṭībī, beside some others, said: Though the sense of light is common to both words, but *nūr* is general. Whether strong or weak, dim or clear, every light is referred to as *nūr*, while ضوء و ضياء (*ḍaw'* and *ḍiyā'*) refer to light that is strong and clear. One needs both kinds of light. For the usual business of life, the sharp and clear light of the day is required, while the comparatively dim light of the night is preferred for ordinary chores. If the day had nothing but the pale light of the moon, business will be affect-

ed adversely, and if the sun were to keep shining also during the night, sleep and chores that must be taken care of at that time alone would be disturbed. Therefore, nature made arrangements to provide both kinds of light by giving sunlight the degree of *ḍaw'* and *ḍiyā'* and let it manifest itself at the time when people are busy in business, vocation or other avenues of livelihood. And the moonlight was made to be gentle, pale and pleasing and the night was appointed to be the time of its manifestation.

The Holy Qur'ān has differentiated the lights of the sun and the moon variously at several places. In Sūrah Nūḥ, it was said: وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَّجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا (And made the moon a light therein and made the sun, a lamp – 71:16). Again, in Sūrah al-Furqān, it was said: وَّجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا (and placed in it [the sky] a lamp, and a shining moon – 25:61). '*Sirāj*' means lamp and since the light from a lamp is its own and not borrowed from somewhere else, therefore, some commentators have said that ضياء (*ḍiyā'*) is the intrinsic light of something while نور (*nūr*) is extrinsic light derived from something else. This semantic approach appears to be influenced by Greek thought, otherwise it has no lexical basis and the Qur'ān too has not given any categorical verdict about it.

Zajjāj takes *ḍiyā'* to be the plural of *ḍaw'*. Perhaps, this may be indicative of the Sun being a compendium of the seven colours of light which show up in the post-rain rainbow. (Al-Manār)

Another manifestation of Divine power related to the system of the sun and the moon appears in the second sentence of verse 5: وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ: 'and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of years and the calculation (of time).' The word قدر ('*qaddara*') is a derivation from تقدير (*taqdīr*) which means to maintain something at the level of a particular quantity and measure in terms of time or place or attributes. To keep the timings of the night and the day at a particular measure, the Holy Qur'ān has said: وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (And Allah determines [the measure of] the night and the day – 73:20). That spatial and travel distances have been kept at a particular measure finds mention elsewhere. In Sūrah Sabā,' it was said about the habitations lying in between Syria and Sabā': وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ (and We determined between them the [distance of] journey – 34:18). And about quantitative measures in general, it was said: وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا (and created everything then determined a measure for it, determining pre-

cisely – Sūrah al-Furqān, 25:2).

The word: منازل (*manāzil*) in the verse under study is the plural form of منزل (*manzil*) which essentially means the place one arrives at on a journey, its stage or destination. Allah Ta'ālā has appointed specific limits for the movement of the Sun and the Moon, each of which is called *manzil* or stage. Since the Moon completes its orbit of the Earth every month, the count of its stages comes to thirty or twenty-nine. However, since the Moon is not visible at least for a day, therefore, its stages are usually known as twenty- eight. The orbit of the Sun is complete in a year and it has 360 or 365 stages. During the Arab Jāhiliyah, and by astronomers and mathematicians as well, particular names were given to these stages as borrowed from stars located in their proximity. Being above such technical nomenclatures, the Holy Qur'ān has simply referred to the distances the Sun and the Moon cover in specified number of days.

In the verse under discussion, the words: قَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ (and determined for it stages) have been used with a pronoun in the singular form – although, being referred to here are the stages of both the Sun and the Moon. Therefore, some commentators say that, no doubt, what has been mentioned here is in the singular form, but in terms of the reference to each single one, it includes both. Examples of this usage abound in the Qur'ān, and Arabic idiom.

Some other commentators have said, 'though, Allah Ta'ālā has determined stages for the Sun and the Moon both but, at this place, the purpose is to describe the stages of the Moon only. Therefore, the pronoun in قَدَّرَهٗ (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) refers back to the Moon. The reason for this specification is that one cannot find out the stages of the Sun without the help of relevant instruments and calculations. Sunrise and sunset follow the same pattern every day throughout the year. A simple observation cannot tell anybody in what stage the Sun is on a given day. This is contrary to the case of the Moon. Its states are different every day. By the end of the month, it is just not visible. By observing such changes, even uneducated people can figure out the dates. For example, let us say the date today is March 8. Now, by just looking at the Sun, nobody can tell whether it is the 8th or the 21st. The case of the Moon is different. One can find out the date even by looking at it.

In the cited verse, the purpose is to tell people that man's own interest is also tied to these great signs of Allah Ta'ālā since the count of years, months and its dates can be kept through them. No doubt, this calculation can be made from the Sun and the Moon both. Years and months, both Solar and Lunar, are universally known. Then, the Qur'ān has also mentioned in Sūrah al-'Isrā' (Banī Isrā'īl):

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ اٰيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَآ اٰيَةَ الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَآ اٰيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ .

And We made the night and the day two signs. Then made the sign of the night disappear, and put the sign of the day with the light to see, so that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and that you may come to know the number of years, and the count (of time) – (17:12).

Here, 'the sign of the night' means the Moon and 'the sign of the day,' the Sun. It is only after having mentioned both that it was said that you can find out the number of years and the dates of the months from these. And in Sūrah Al-Raḥmān it was said: اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ which tells us that we can calculate the date, the month and the year through the Sun and the Moon both.

But, the calculation of month and date through the Moon is based on observation and experience. On the contrary, when done through the Sun, the calculations are so complex that no one other than regular mathematicians would understand them. Therefore, after having mentioned both the Sun and the Moon in this verse, when the Qur'ān talks about having determined their stages, it elects to say: قَدَّرَهٗ (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) using the pronoun in its singular form, whereby mentioned there were the stages of the Moon only.

Since great attention is paid in the injunctions of Islam, practically in all situations, to ensure that abiding by them is easy for everyone – educated or uneducated, urbanized or rustic – therefore, reliance has usually been placed on lunar year, month and dates in its laws. Thus, it is the lunar calendar that operates in all matters of Islamic obligations and duties, such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Zakāh, 'Iddah etc.

This does not mean that using the Solar Calendar is impermissible. In fact, one can choose to use the Lunar Calendar in the case of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and 'Iddah in accordance with the Sharī'ah, but

use the Solar Calendar in commercial and vocational activities. However, this is subject to the condition that the Lunar Calendar must continue to be in use among Muslims on a collective basis, so that the occasions and timings of religious obligations such as Ramaḍān and Ḥajj are in common knowledge at all times. This is to avoid the terrible situation in which Muslims just know no other months but January, February etc. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be on them, have placed the responsibility of keeping the Lunar Calendar alive and functional on Muslims as *Farḍ al-Kifāyah* (collective obligation).

And there is no doubt about it that the Calendar used in the Tradition of the blessed prophets and in the Sunnah of the Last among them, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and in the practice of his rightly-guided *Khulafā'* was no other but this very Lunar Calendar. Using it, following in their footsteps, is certainly an effective cause of blessings and rewards for modern day Muslims as well.

In short, the verse points out to the perfect power and wisdom of Allah who created two inexhaustible treasure troves of light so harmoniously synchronized with the rest of the creation. And then, He determined ideal measures of their movement which help us find the time frame we are in, the year, the month, the day and its hours right up to every second. Neither does their movement vary, nor do they go ahead or remain behind, nor do these God-made marvels of what we call machines need any workshop appointments for repairs, nor greasing, nor replacement of worn-out parts. Someone in eternity had asked them to move and be good. This they are doing even today.

For added warning, it was said at the end of the verse (5): مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand). It means that Allah did not create all these things in vain. There is great wisdom behind it, and certainly numerous are the benefits they bring for human beings. These are elaborated signs. They are loud and clear. They are telling the truth to people who are blessed with reason and insight.

Similarly, it was said in the second verse (6) that there are signs in the coming of the night after the day and the day after the night, and in everything Allah has created in the heavens and the earth. These are open proofs (of the Oneness of Allah and the inevitability of the

Hereafter) for those who fear Allah.

That they are proofs of the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) is not difficult to see. He has the power to make things happen. He makes things as no one can. He creates everything without the help of materials, personnel and prototype, and has the mastery to operate them under a system that never breaks or must be replaced.

And they are proofs of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) because Allah is a great creator. He created, in His infinite wisdom, objects of such proportion and efficiency for the benefit of human beings. Then, He made them follow a remarkably stable system. Now, it is not possible that He would have created human beings, who are the served ones in this universe, just for nothing, or just to eat and drink, or in some other nonchalant manner without assigning any duties to them. When it stands settled that some restrictions must apply to the served one of this universe, it also becomes necessary that those who observe or do not observe these restrictions should face an accounting of what they have done, sometime, somewhere. Naturally, those who do observe these shall be rewarded and those who do not shall be punished. Then, it is also obvious that things do not work like this in the present world of our experience. Here, reward and punishment do not follow that pattern. It is quite likely that a criminal here may be living better as compared to someone God-fearing, righteous and innocent. Therefore, it is necessary to have a day for the accounting of deeds, rewards and punishments. This is what Qiyāmah (The Last Day) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) are.

Verses 7 – 10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا
بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا غٰفِلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا
كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
يَهْدِيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِاِيْمَانِهِمْ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ فِيْ جَنّٰتِ
النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٩﴾ دَعْوٰىهُمْ فِيْهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيْهَا سَلٰمٌ
وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

As for those who do not believe in meeting Us and are-

happy with the life of this world and are quite satisfied with it, and those who are heedless to Our signs, [7] **they are the ones whose abode is the Fire because of what they used to earn for themselves.** [8]

As for those who believed and did good deeds, their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief, rivers flowing beneath them in the Gardens of Bliss. [9]

Their prayer therein will be, "Pure are You, O Allah" and their greeting therein will be "Salām." And the end of their call will be, "praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds." [10]

Commentary

In the previous verses, by mentioning the heavens and the earth and the Moon and the Sun, prominent manifestations of Allah's perfect power and wisdom, the belief in the Oneness of Allah and the Hereafter was proved eloquently. The first three of the present verses tell us that, despite such open signs and evidences spread out in this universe, human beings split up in two groups. One of the two groups was of those who paid just no heed to these Divine signs, failed to recognize their creator and master and failed to recognize even themselves. It never occurred to them that they were no animal like other animals. They never discovered that their Almighty Lord had blessed them with intelligence, reason and commonsense in a degree much higher than that of the animals. Their Lord had put the entire resources of Divine creation at their doorsteps. Everything was as if commissioned to serve them. This should have made them realize that there has to be something their Lord would want them to do, some duty or obligation or charge. If that had to be the case, they would have to account for whatever they had been asked to do. And for this it would be necessary that there should be a day fixed for ultimate reckoning and recompense – known as the day of Qiyāmah or al-Ḥashr (Doomsday, Resurrection) in the terminology of the Qur'ān. But, such people did nothing like that, instead, preferred to live their lives at the level of common animals. In the first two verses, after giving the signs and marks of these people, the text mentions the punishment they would receive in the Hereafter. The first thing the text tells is that such people did not think that they would meet their Lord. They have forgotten all about the inevitability of their life in the Hereafter and have be-

come pleased and content with their worldly life alone.

Then, they are sitting there, so satisfied and so content, as if they just do not have to go anywhere else from here. This, to them, was the end of the line and this was where they have to live forever. It never occurs to them that everyone has to bid farewell to this world. This is so open a truth that no one can go about doubting it. And when going away from here is certain, then, some preparation has to be made for the place one is going to.

And then, they are continuously heedless to Allah's verses and signs. Had they pondered over the marvel of the heavens and the earth and what was created in between them and, for that matter, over what was in the their own person, they would have understood the reality behind everything and they would have thus come out of their fatal negligence.

The punishment of people whose signs have been given above is the fire of Jahannam that waits for them in the Hereafter – and this punishment is nothing but the outcome of their own deeds.

How regrettable that the signs of disbelievers and deniers pin-pointed by the Qur'ān are no different as far as our own present condition as Muslims is concerned. By looking at our way of life and the pattern of our activities and thoughts, no one can come to the conclusion that we have some other concern bothering us except the concerns of this world under our noses. Yet, despite all that, we sit comfortably believing that we are Muslims, as staunch and true as they come. The hard reality is that the kind of staunch and true Muslims our worthy forbears were has become unimaginable for us. They were the ones a look at whose faces would remind one of God and transmit unmistakably that they feared someone above them and their hearts throbbed with the concern of being accountable to Him. Not to say more about these wonderful people, even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, despite being protected from sins (*ma'ṣūm*), lived his blessed life in that state. It appears in Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم looked sad and concerned fairly often.

Mentioned in the third verse (9) are those fortunate people who pondered over the signs of the most exalted Allah. Thereby, they recognized Him, believed in Him and, by acting in accordance with the

dictates of their faith, became duty-bound to say and do what was good and right (*al-a'māl aṣ-ṣāliḥah*: good deeds).

The good return and reward made due by the Holy Qur'ān for these wonderful people has been mentioned in a particular manner. It was said: أُولَٰئِكَ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ (their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief), that is, 'take them to their destination, the Jannah [Paradise], where rivers shall be flowing in the Gardens of Bliss.'

The well known meaning of the word: هداية (*hidāyah*) used here is to tell or show the way. Then, on occasions, it is also used in the sense of taking someone all the way to the desired destination. At this place, this is the meaning intended. As for the desired destination, it means Jannah that stands clarified by the words appearing later.

It will be recalled that the punishment of the first group was the outcome of their own misdeeds. Here, similar to that, it was said about the reward of the second group (of believers), that they have been blessed with this reward by virtue of their belief. And since, belief has been bracketed with good deeds earlier, therefore, *'Imān* or belief mentioned at this place will mean belief that is supported by good deeds (*al-a'māl aṣ-ṣāliḥah*). The return for belief and good deeds is Jannah, the place of unimaginable and unparalleled bliss.

Some particular states in which the people of Jannah shall find themselves after their arrival there have been spelt out in the fourth verse (10). First of all: دَعْوٰهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ : (their prayer therein will be, "Pure are you, O Allah"). Here, the word: دَعْوٰى (*da'wā*) should not be taken in its well known sense of claim, something a plaintiff does against the responding party. Instead of that, *da'wā* has been used here in the sense of *du'ā'* (prayer, supplication). It means that the *du'ā'* of the people of Jannah, after they have reached Jannah, will be in the form that they will be saying: سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ (Pure are You, O Allah), that is, they will be glorifying the exalted majesty of Allah (known as Tasbīḥ in the religious terminology of Islām).

This raises a question for *du'ā'*, as commonly recognized, is the act of asking for something or the seeking of what one would like to have. The words: سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ (*subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah) have no element of asking or seeking in them. Then, what was the basis of calling it '*du'ā'*'?

The answer is that the expression used here is there to communicate something relevant to the great occasion. Is it not that the people of Jannah will have the most comprehensive bliss which will include everything they could wish for almost automatically as they would have wished? So, there will be no asking or seeking. As a replacement of the popular mode of *du'ā*, what they would be able to say would be nothing more than the *tasbīḥ* of Allah in total submission. That too would not be something like an obligatory act of worship they used to do in their mortal lives (whether or not they enjoyed doing so). In fact, they would savor the taste of saying these words of glorification and say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma* on their own, gratefully delighted. In addition, reports a Qudsī Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā said, 'a servant of Mine who remains busy glorifying Me all the time, so much so that he finds no time even to ask what was to be asked, then, I shall give him the best of what is asked by all those who ask, that is, take care of what he needs to be done without his having to ask for it.' If so, the expression: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma* that has been translated as 'Pure are You, O Allah' could also be called a *du'ā'* (prayer).

It is in terms of this sense that a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to make the following *du'ā'* when in pain or anxiety:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيْمُ الْحَلِيْمُ ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ، لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَرَبُّ الْاَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ .

There is no god but Allah, the Great, the Forbearing; there is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Great Throne; there is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens and the Lord of the Earth and the Lord of the Generous Throne.

Imām al-Ṭabarī said: The worthy forbears of the Muslim Community (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥūn*) used to call it the prayer of pain (the *du'ā* of *karb*). Whenever in intense pain, anxiety or distress, they would recite these words and pray to Allah for relief. (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

There is yet another Ḥadīth report carried by Imām Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir and others that the people of Jannah, when they wish to have something, will say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*. Hearing this, the angels will instantly present what they wished before them – as if, the words: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma* will serve as a password or access code

for the people of Jannah through which they will articulate their wish, and the angels, doing their duty, will fulfill it every time. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Qurṭubī) From that angle , we can also call the statement: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*, a *du'ā*.

Describing the second state of the life of the people of Jannah, it was said: تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ (and their greeting therein will be "*Salām*"). In customary usage, تَحِيَّة (*taḥiyyah*) is the word used to greet someone coming in or met elsewhere, for example *ahlan wa sahlan*, as the Arabs say, or good morning, good evening, nice to see you, hello, hi as used in English with varying degrees of formality or informality. This verse tells us that the people of Jannah will be greeted with the word: *salām* from Allah Ta'ālā or from the angels. It would mean, 'good news to you that you now stand protected against everything painful or unpleasant.' This '*salām*' greeting could also be from Allah Ta'ālā Himself as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِّن رَّبٍّ رَّحِيمٍ ("*Salām*" [peace], a word from a merciful Lord – 36:58). And it could also be from the angels as said elsewhere: وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن كُلِّ بَابٍ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُم : "and angels will come to them from every gate [saying] '*salāmun 'alaikum*' [may you be in peace and security] – 13:23,24." By the way, there is no contradiction in the two sayings. There could be the time when *salām* greeting comes directly from Allah Ta'ālā and there could be the time when it comes from the angels. Though, the *salām* greeting is actually a *du'ā* (prayer) in the mortal world but, once in Jannah where one would have everything one needs or wishes to have, therefore, this word will not retain its sense of prayer there, instead, will become a complement of glad tidings. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Describing the third state of the life of the people of Jannah, it was said: وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (And the end of their call will be, 'praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds').

The essential aim of the statement is to indicate that the people of Jannah, once there, will start knowing Allah Ta'ālā better. The spiritual master Shahābuddīn Suhrawardī, said, 'after having reached Jannah, the people of Jannah as a whole will be blessed with a station of knowledge and wisdom which is occupied by 'Ulamā in the mortal world. The 'Ulamā would rise to the station the prophets have here. The prophets would rise to the station occupied by Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among them in this world.

And he, blessings and peace on him, will occupy the highest station of nearness to Allah in Jannah. It is possible that this may be the celebrated place called 'the praised station' (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*), a place referred to in the *du'ā* to be recited after *adhān* where Muslims pray that their prophet may be blessed with 'the praised station,' a prayer he had himself taught them to make.

In short, the initial *du'ā* of the people of Jannah will be: سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ (*subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah) and the last *du'ā* will be: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (*alḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-'alamīn*: praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds). Pointed to here are two kinds of attributes of Allah Ta'ālā. One: The attributes of being the most exalted which show that He is free from and beyond any shortcoming or evil. Two: The attributes of being the noblest which show honor, greatness, magnanimity and perfection. In the last verse of Sūrah ar-Raḥmān both kinds have been named by saying: تَبٰرَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِی الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ (Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Possessor-par-Excellence of Majesty and Honor – 55:78). If we were to ponder a little, we will see that absolute purity of Allah Ta'ālā forms part of His attribute of Majesty. And that He deserves being praised is one of His attributes of Honor. Since the attributes of Majesty and Honor follow in that order, therefore, the people of Jannah will first recount His Majesty by saying: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah. Then, they will mention the words: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (*alḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-'alamīn*: Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds) being a tribute to His Honor, something they are engaged in all the time.

And according to the natural order of these three states, when the people of Jannah will say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*, in response to which, they will receive the greeting of *salām* from Allah Ta'ālā, as a result of which, they will say: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Injunctions and Rulings

Al-Qurṭubī has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: According to this conduct of the people of Jannah, Sunnah in eating and drinking, and in everything else we do, is that one starts with *Bismillāh* and ends at *Alḥamdulillāh*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'It is liked by Allah Ta'ālā that His servant, when he eats or drinks something, starts with

Bismillah (بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ) and, when he is finished with it, says *Al-hamdulillah'* (اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ).

It is recommended (*mustaḥabb*) that a person making *du'ā* also says: وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىنَآ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our prayer at the end is that praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds) at the end of it. Al-Qurṭubī adds to that by saying: Along with it, it is better to also recite the following last verses of Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣāffāt:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ . وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ . وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ .

Pure is your Lord, Lord of all might, above from what they ascribe to Him. And *salām* (peace and security) be on the Messengers. And praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds – 37:180-182.

Verses 11 – 17

وَلَوْ يُعَجِّلُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتِعْجَالَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرِ لَقُضِيَ
اِلَيْهِمْ اَجَلُهُمْ ؕ فَنَذَرُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ
يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَاِذَا مَسَّ الْاِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْۢبِهٖۤ اَوْ
قَاعِدًا اَوْ قَآئِمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهٗ مَرَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَدْعُنَاۤ اِلٰى
ضُرٍّ مَّسَّهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾
وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوْا ۙ وَجَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَمَا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيَاتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا ائْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَاۤ اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ ؕ قُلْ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْۤ
اَنْ اُبَدِّلَهٗ مِنْ تِلْقَآئِ نَفْسِيْ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰۤى اِلَيَّ ۚ اِنِّيْۤ
اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ شَآءَ
اللّٰهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَاۤ اَدْرٰىكُمْ بِهٖ ۫ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمُرًا
مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ

كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾

And if Allah were to hasten in sending evil to the people, as they hasten in seeking good, their time would have been all over. So, We leave those, who do not believe in meeting Us, wandering blindly in their rebellion. [11]

And when hardship hits a person, he prays to Us lying or sitting or standing. Later, when We remove from him the hardship, he walks away as though he had never prayed to Us in any hardship that hit him. This is how their deeds appear beautified to the transgressors. [12]

And indeed We have destroyed generations before you when they transgressed, while their Messengers came to them with clear signs. And they were not the ones to believe. This is how We punish the guilty people. [13]

Then We made you vice-regents on the earth, so that we see how you would act. [14]

And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, say those who do not believe in meeting Us, "Bring a Qur'ān other than this, or make changes in it." Say, "It is not for me to make changes in it on my own. I follow nothing but what is revealed to me. I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a terrible day." [15]

Say, "Had Allah so willed, I would have not recited it to you, nor would He have let you know it. Then, I have lived among you for years before it. Have you, then, no sense?" [16]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? The fact is that the guilty do not succeed. [17]

Commentary

The first of the seven verses cited above relates to people who deny *'Ākhirah* (Hereafter, life to come). For this reason, when they are warned against the punishment of 'Ākhirah, they mockingly say, 'if you are telling the truth, bring this punishment now' or say something like, 'why would this punishment not come soon enough?' This was like what Naḍr ibn Ḥārith had said, 'O Allah, if this thing is true, let stones rain down upon us from the heavens, or send some other severe

punishment.'

It has been answered in the same verse by saying that Allah Ta'ālā is, after all, powerful over everything. He can send the promised punishment instantly, right now. But, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, He prefers not to do so. When people like these wish to have evil and hardship sent upon them, they do not realize what they were doing. Had Allah Ta'ālā been granting their curses on themselves as soon as they wished – similar to how He would answer their positive prayers fairly often – all of them would have been destroyed to the last man.

From here we learn that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He would answer prayers for one's good fairly often and if, on one or the other occasion, a prayer is not answered due to some wise consideration, it would not be contrary to the general rule. But, the case of a person who, because of his ignorance, or anger, or grief, falls into the error of hurling on himself or his family a curse in the fair name of prayer is different. Similar to this is the unfortunate one who invites Divine punishment, due against those who reject the truth of a Hereafter, to fall on him, as if playing a game with God. Allah Ta'ālā does not accept these prayers promptly, instead, gives them respite so that the denier gets the time to think and abstain from his denial. Or, if the curse has been invoked because of some sudden grief, anger or desperation, then one gets the lease of time to sort out his conduct, avoid what is bad about it and try to stay away from it thereafter.

Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Qatādah and al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Mujāhid report that, at this place, the invoking of curse refers to what an angry person sometimes does when he breaks into supplicating adversely to the effect that his children, wealth or property be destroyed. Even if the person were to blurt out words of curse on these, it will stand included therein. Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite mercy, does not hasten to answer such prayers. Imām al-Qurṭubī, on the authority of a Ḥadīth narrative, reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'I have prayed to Allah *jalla thanā'uh* imploring Him not to answer the curse invoked by a friend or relative upon another friend or relative.' Shahr ibn Ḥawshab says, 'I have read that angels appointed to take care of human needs have been instructed by Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, that they should not write down what His servant says in grief or anger.' (Qurṭubī)

Despite what has been said here, there are occasions when comes that moment of Divine approval in which what one is saying on the spot gets to be accepted instantly. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'never pray that evil may fall on your children or things you own – lest, that time be the time the prayer is to be accepted – and the curse so invoked may stand answered (and activated) all of a sudden (causing you remorse afterwards).' This Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضی الله عنه appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim under the event of the battle of Buwāṭ.

The outcome of all these Ḥadīth reports is as follows. As obvious, the main address in the verse under reference concerns the deniers of 'Ākhirah who demanded an instant punishment. But, in view of its universality, it includes Muslims as well, who may also break into invoking a curse on themselves or on their belongings and children under some fit of grief or anger. Such is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā, because of His grace and compassion, that he deals with both of them in the same manner. He does not allow such invocations for curses to be actualized and implemented instantly so that the erring person gets the opportunity to think it out and rescind.

An eloquent approach has been made in the second verse (12) to convince those who denied that Allah was One (*Tauḥīd*) and that there was a life to come (*'Ākhirah*). It was said: When conditions are normal, people would find time to engage in debating the nature and existence of God and the Hereafter. They would feel free to ascribe all sorts of partners and associates to His pristine divinity and look forward to them in the hope that they would respond at their hour of need. But, as soon as some major distress overtakes them, even these very people, disappointed by the entire range of their false gods they pinned their hopes on, do nothing but call Allah for help, not simply once but repeatedly, lying, sitting, standing. They have no choice. They must invoke Him for help. However, along with this attitude, certainly terrible is their ingratitude. When Allah Ta'ālā removes their distress, they forget all about Him becoming so disconnected and indifferent to Him as if they had never called Him and never sought His help in their hour of need. This tells us that those who associate anyone or anything else with Allah Ta'ālā in His exclusive domain as the Dispenser of all that is needed by His creation do themselves get to experience the

demolition of this belief of theirs. But, because of their hostility and obstinacy, they keep glued to their false notion.

The subject of verse 12 has been emphasized from a different angle in verse 13. It has been said: Let no one miscalculate that punishment cannot come in this world just because Allah Ta'ālā gives respite to those who deny and disbelieve. The history of past peoples shows that different kinds of punishments have visited them because of their contumacy and disobedience right here in this world. It is a different matter that Allah Ta'ālā has promised that no mass punishment will come upon the Muslim *ummah* in consideration of the honor of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among prophets. But, it is in the face of this very merciful indulgence of Almighty Allah that people have become audacious enough to come forward and invite, even demand, Divine punishment. On the contrary, it is necessary to remember that indifference to Divine punishment is not proper under any condition even for them (Muslims). The reason is that the promise of not sending mass punishment upon the Muslim *ummah*, or the world as a whole, certainly stands there, but the coming of such punishment on particular individuals and nations is possible even now.

In verse 14, it was said: ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِی الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَیْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Then We made you vice-regents on the earth, in order to see how you would act), that is, 'after the destruction of past peoples, We made you successors to them giving you the vice-regency of the earth. But, let this not give you any false idea that this vice-regency of the earth has been given to you so that you could have a good time. In fact, this honor has been bestowed on you to test you and to see how you would act – would you learn your lesson from the history of past peoples or would you lose your head drunk with power and wealth?'

This tells us that worldly power is not something to be proud of or arrogant about. This is responsibility at its toughest, a charge very heavy and very fragile to handle.

In the last three verses (15-17), there is the refutation of a false notion entertained by the deniers of 'Ākhirah and also the rejection of an inappropriate request made by them. They were a people who did not know much about God or Revelation or Prophets sent by Him. They took them to be like common human beings having nothing special about them. Think of the Holy Qur'ān, which reached the world

through the Prophet of Islām. Even this, they thought, was spoken and written by him. It was under this frame of mind that they told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'as for this Qur'ān, it is against our beliefs and ideas.' These idols our forefathers have been worshipping since ever as providers of their needs are, according to the Qur'ān, totally false and ineffectual. There are things we have been using and transactions we have been making all along. The Qur'ān says that they are all unlawful. And then, the Qur'ān tells us that we have to live again after we are dead and that we have to account for everything we have done. All these things make no sense to us. We are not ready to accept them. Therefore, you do one of the two things we are asking you to do. Either you replace this one with another Qur'ān which does not have these things, or at the least, amend this very Qur'ān and expunge those (undesirable) things from there.'

Rejecting their false notion first, the Qur'ān instructs the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell those people that the Qur'ān was not his Word, nor could he change it on his own. He only followed what was revealed to him by Allah. If he were to make the least change in it on his own and by his choice, he would be committing a grave sin, and that he feared the punishment that falls upon those who disobey Allah, therefore, he could not do that.

Then he was asked to tell them that he did everything under Divine orders. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that this Word should not be recited to them, neither would he have recited that to them, nor would He have let them know about that. Now that it was the very will of Allah Ta'ālā that they should be made to listen to precisely that Word, who can dare make any addition or deletion therein?

After that, the fact that the Qur'ān was from Allah and that it was His Word was driven home with an open argument by saying: فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ (Then I have lived among you for years before it). In effect, he was saying, 'just think for a moment. Is it not that, much before the revelation of the Qur'ān, I have spent a long period of forty years of my life among you? During this period, you have never heard me composing and reciting poetry or writing essays in prose. Had I been proficient in saying something like this Word of Allah, I would have naturally said at least some of it during this period of forty years. In addition to that, you have a direct experience of my character and con-

duct, particularly of my truth and honesty, during these long forty years of my life among you. You know that I have never lied then. How and why would I start lying now after all those forty years?' This clearly proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is true and trustworthy. Whatever there is in the Qur'ān is the Word of Allah Ta'ālā and has come from Him.

Important Note

No doubt, this argument of the Qur'ān provides a perfect proof of its veracity as the Word of Allah. But, it has also given us a standing rule of conduct in matters of common interest where we must be able to separate the genuine from the counterfeit and the true from the false. When an office or rank of responsibility has to be given to a person, it becomes necessary to assess the qualification and capability of the incumbent. To do that, the best rule is to go through the record of his past life. If the person concerned is found to be true and trustworthy, the same can be expected from him in the future as well. And if, there is no evidence to prove his honesty and truth in that person's past life, trusting him for the future just because of what he says or claims is not a wise thing to do. In our time, finding the right person for an office of responsibility has become a nightmare. All sorts of errors (of intent, background research and decision making) are being committed and errors are compounded by widespread disorders (in social and governmental institutions). The real reason why all this is happening is the abandonment of this natural principle in favor of what is customary, formal (or straight dishonest).

The last verse (17) emphasizes the subject conclusively by warning that attributing any statement to Allah Ta'ālā that was not His Word, or denying what actually was, were crimes deserving severe punishment.

Verses 18 – 20

وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ شُفَعَآؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَتُنَبِّئُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِى
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ
﴿۱۸﴾ وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ اِلَّآ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوْا ؕ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ

سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيْمَا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لَوْ لَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ۚ فَقُلْ اِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلّٰهِ
فَانْتَظِرُوْا ۚ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

And they worship, besides Allah, what can neither harm them, nor benefit them, and they say, "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say, "Are you informing Allah of what He does not know to exist in the heavens or on the earth?" Pure is He, and far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him. [18]

And people were but one community; later, they differed. But for a word from your Lord that had already come, there would have come a decision between them on what they used to differ. [19]

And they say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "The Unseen is only for Allah. So, wait. I am waiting with you." [20]

Commentary

Disbelievers and Believers are two separate nationalities: Nationality based on race and country is absurd

The statement: كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (And people were but one community) in verse 19 means that the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was essentially a single community of monotheists in the earlier stages of man's presence in the world. Shirk and Kufr were unknown as such. Then came up difference in the principle of pure monotheism that divided human beings in different nations and groups of people.

How long this period of a single community of believers last? Original sources of Islāmic Tradition tell us that this situation prevailed up to the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ (Noah). It was during his time that Shirk and Kufr showed up and he was the one who had to confront it first. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Then, it is also obvious that there is a long period of time between Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, may peace be on them both. Human race had multiplied and population had spread out in the world. The presence of differences in color, ethnicity and social life styles was natural. That people had spread themselves out in different regions would have certainly generated differences on the basis of

country and homeland. Then, it is also possible that spoken languages may have become somewhat different. But, the Holy Qur'ān did not allow these natural genealogical or tribal differences or those of color and country to become impediments to the grand design of one community. In fact, it did not declare the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to be different nations and communities because of these differences. Instead, it gave them the status of one community.

Of course, when Kufr and Shirk spread out and posed a threat to 'Īmān or true belief, Kāfirs and Mushriks were declared to be a separate community of people as indicated in: فَاخْتَلَفُوا (later, they differed). Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān: هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَمِنكُم مُّؤْمِنٌ (It is He who created you; yet there is among you a disbeliever and there is among you a believer – At-taghābun, 64:2) makes it more explicit. It tells that the thing that separates the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام created by Allah into different peoples is the deviation from 'Īmān and Islām. Bonds of lineage or country do not make people separate. Bracketing human beings into different groups on the basis of language, homeland, color or race is ignorance dished out in the garb of enlightenment. It is new. But everything new is not necessarily true and wise. In fact, it might as well be the exact opposite of what is wise. Today, there are many educated people who have also fallen into the trap of this narrow concept of nationalism based on the factors enumerated above. Unfortunately, this approach towards ordering the social life of human beings is fraught with seeds of countless unseen disasters. May Allah keep Muslims safe from its evil effects.

Verses 21 – 24

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَّاءَ مَسَّتْهُمْ إِذَا لَهُمْ مَّكْرٌ
فِيٓ اٰيَاتِنَا ط قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا ط اِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُوْنَ مَا تَمْكُرُوْنَ
﴿٢١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ط حَتّٰٓى اِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي
الْفُلْكِ ج وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيْحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَّفَرِحُوْا بِهَا جَآءَتْهَا رِيْحٌ
عَاصِفٌ وَّ جَآءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اُحِيْطَ
بِهِمْ لا دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ج لَئِنْ اَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ

لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَنْجٰهُمْ اِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُوْنَ فِى
الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۭ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۙ
مَّتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۡ ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ اِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاۗءٍ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ
السَّمَاۗءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الْاَرْضِ مِمَّا يَاْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْاَنْعَامُ ۭ
حَتّٰٓي اِذَآ اَخَذَتِ الْاَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ اَهْلُهَآ اَنَّهُمْ
قٰدِرُوْنَ عَلَيْهَآ ۙ اَتٰىهَآ اَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا اَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنٰهَا حَصِيْدًا
كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَغْنَ بِالْاَمْسِ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

He is the One who enables you to travel on land and at sea, until when you are in the boats and they sail with those on board under a good wind and they are pleased with it, there comes upon them a violent wind, and the wave comes upon them from many sides. And (when) they think that they are encircled, they pray to Allah, having faith in Him alone, (and say,) "If You deliver us from this, we shall be grateful indeed." [22]

But when He delivers them, they at once start rebelling on the earth wrongfully. O people, your rebellion is, in fact, against your own selves. (It is nothing but) an enjoyment of the worldly life. Therefore, to Us you are to return, then We shall tell you what you have been doing. [23]

The example of worldly life is just like the water We sent down from the heavens, then the vegetation of the earth, eaten by men and cattle, until when the earth took on its ornament and was fully adorned, and its people thought that they had control over it, Our command came to it at night or by day, and We turned it into a stubble, as if it had not been there a day earlier. This is how We elaborate the verses for a people who reflect. [24]

Commentary

The word: مكر (*makr*) used in verse 21: قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا (Say, "Allah is more swift in making plans") means secret plan or move that could be good or bad. Wherever this word has become a part of the local language, care should be taken that it is not rendered as 'deception'. For instance, in Urdu, the original language of this Commentary, it means just this. It is obvious that Allah Ta'ālā is free from it.[1]

The warning given in verse 23: اِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ (your rebellion is, in fact, against your own-selves) tells us that the curse of injustice is certain and, much before matters are settled in the Hereafter, one who is guilty of doing injustice must suffer from its evil consequences in this world as well.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: ' Allah Ta'ālā hastens to repay mercy shown to relatives and favor done to people (whereby its blessings start becoming visible in this world, much before the Hereafter). And He also hastens to repay injustices done and relationships severed (in that its consequences have to be faced within the life of this world).' (Reported by Tirmidhī and Ibn Majāh with a ḥasan *chain* of narrators) In another Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'there are three sins the curse whereof falls on the sinner himself: Injustice, breach of trust and deception.' (Reported by Abū ash-Shaykh and Ibn Mardūwayh in Tafsīr) (See Maẓharī)

Verses 25 – 32

وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ ۭ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنٰى وَزِيَادَةٌ ۭ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ
وُجُوْهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَّلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ
﴿۲۶﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ جَزَاۗءُ سَيِّئَةٍۢ بِمِثْلِهَا ۙ وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ
ذِلَّةٌ ۭ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ كَاَنَّمَآ اُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ
قِطَعًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا

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1. The English language has no such problems as the open sense of *makr* can be transmitted through 'plan' or 'move' (Translator)

خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا
مَكَانَكُمْ اَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَآؤُكُمْ ۚ فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَالَ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ
مَّا كُنْتُمْ اِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ۢ بَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَكُمْ اِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُوْا كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ مَّآ اَسْلَفَتْ وَرُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا
كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ
اَمَّنْ يَّمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُّخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ
وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُّدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ۭ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اللّٰهُ ۚ
فَقُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ
الْحَقِّ اِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُصْرَفُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And Allah invites (people) to the Abode of Peace and brings whom He wills to a straight path. [25]

For those who do good there is the best, and something more, and neither darkness nor disgrace shall cover their faces. Those are the people of Paradise. Therein they shall live forever. [26]

As for those who commit evils, the recompense of each evil shall be similar to that evil, and disgrace shall cover them. For them, there is none to save from Allah. Their faces seem to be covered with layers of a dark night. Those are the people of the Fire. Therein they shall live forever. [27]

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Wait in your place, you and your associate-gods." Then We shall cause a split between them, and their associate-gods will say, "It was not us that you worshipped. [28] **So, Allah is enough as witness between us and between you. We were certainly unaware of your worship."** [29]

Thereupon, everyone shall assess what one sent ahead, and they will be sent back to Allah, their true Lord, and lost to them shall be what they used to coin. [30]

> **Say, "Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Or, who controls the (powers of) hearing and seeing? And who brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living? And who manages everything?" They will say, "Allah." Then, (you) say, "Would you not, then, fear Allah?"** [31]
>
> **So, that is Allah, your Lord in truth. And what is there, after truth, but error? Where, then, are you being diverted?** [32]

Commentary

In the previous verse (24), the transitory nature of worldly life was likened to a field. Water came from the heavens and it became verdant with flowers and fruits and crops. Growers were happy to presume that this will take care of everything they needed. But, because of their acts of disobedience, some unforeseen Divine punishment descended during the time of the night or day. Everything stood wiped off – as if nothing had existed there. This was the state of worldly life. After that comes a description of the life-to-come as it would be (25).

It was said: وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ (And Allah invites [people] to the Abode of Peace). It means a Home where absolute and eternal peace reigns, a Home that has neither pain and sorrow, nor the danger of disease, nor the concern of adverse change or sudden extinction.

'*Dāru 's-Salām*' means the Jannah or Paradise. One reason why it has been called *Dāru 's-Salām* is that everyone will have ideal peace and security there. The second reason appears in some reports from Ḥadīth. They say that Jannah has been given the name of *Dāru 's-Salām* also because its dwellers shall always be receiving *Salām* greetings from Allah Ta'ālā, and from the angels as well. In fact, the word: *Salām* would itself be a sort of technical keyword used by the people of Jannah to express their wishes which the angels would fulfill. For details, please see the commentary on verse 10.

While explaining this verse, Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh has given some man-to-man advice to whomsoever it may reach:

> 'O son of Ādam! Allah Almighty invited you to the Home of Peace (*Dāru 's-Salām*). When and from which country would you take that right step in response to this Divine call? Understand, and mark it well. If you have started making efforts to say yes to this invitation (from your Lord) while you are

still here in this world, you will succeed. You will reach the Home of Peace. And if you wasted the years of your life here, then landed in your grave, and then thought of following this call, you will be stopped. You will not move from there, not even one step – because, the place where you are is no Home of Deeds (*Dāru 'l-'Amal*).'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said, '*Dāru 's-Salām* is one of the seven names of Jannah.' (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

This tells us that it is not proper to name a house in this world as *Dāru 's-Salām*. Similarly, it is also not correct to give it names like Jannah or Firdaus (Paradise).

After that, it was said in the cited verse: وَيَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ (and He brings whom He wills to a straight path – 25). The sense is that the invitation to the Abode of Peace (*Dāru 's-Salām*) is universal, open to all human beings and, in terms of this sense, guidance too is open to all. But, there is a kind of guidance that is special. Here, a seeker is made to stand on the straight path and given the ability to move ahead on course. This is *Taufīq* at its best. Only fortunate people are blessed with it.

Compared in the first two verses (24, 25) were the two Abodes of the present world and the world-to-come. Mention was also made of the states in which their dwellers were. The next four verses (26-29) describe the reward and punishment of both. Taken up first were the people of Paradise. About them it was said that those who opted for good, the greatest good was that of '*Īmān* (belief and faith) supplemented by staunch adherence to *al-'amalu 'ṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds). They will have the best of returns for what they do, not simply what is coming to them as due, but much more than it.

The *tafsīr* of this verse was given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself. He explained it by saying, 'at this place, الحسنى :*al-ḥusnā*: the best [of return] means Jannah (Paradise) and زيادة (*ziyādah*: something more) means the visit to the most exalted Allah with which the people of Jannah shall be honored. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ)

As for the reality of Paradise, this much every Muslim knows that it is a place of bliss beyond human imagination now. And as for the visit to Allah Ta'ālā, that is far superior to whatever blessings there

are.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضى الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said, 'when the people of Jannah would have entered Jannah, Allah Ta'ālā will address them: "Do you need anything? If so, tell Us. We shall fulfill it." The people of Jannah will submit: "You made our faces radiant with delight. You let us be in Jannah. You delivered us from Jahannam. What else can we ask for?" That will be the time when the *ḥijāb* obstructing the view in between will be removed. The people of Jannah, one and all, will be blessed with seeing their true Lord. They will then discover that this was a blessing far more sublime than all other blessings of Jannah, something they had not even thought about, something the Lord of all the worlds bestowed upon them without their having to ask for it simply out of His infinite affection and mercy!'

Then, the text describes the state of the same people of Jannah by saying that their faces will remain free of any effects of distaste, pain or sorrow, nor will they have to be worried about any disgrace. These are conditions everyone faces in the mortal world one or the other time – and those who go to Jahannam will face it in the Hereafter.

In contrast, the state of the people of Jahannam has been described by saying that those who came with evil deeds in their record will have an equal return for each evil without any increase in it. They will have disgrace all over them. There will be no one to save them from the punishment of Allah. Dark will be their faces, so dark as if layers upon layers of a night have covered them up.

In the two verses (27,28) appearing next, there is a dialogue between the people of Jahannam and the idols or satans who had led them astray. The locale will be the plain of Resurrection. It was said: On that day, We shall gather everyone. Then, to the Mushriks We shall say that, 'you and your gods whom you had associated with Us in Our divinity stay in your places where you are, so that you can find out the reality of your conviction.' After that, the connection between these people and their so-called gods as it existed in the mortal world will be disconnected. The result will be that their idols will speak up: 'you never worshipped us.' Making Allah their witness, they will say, 'as for us, we were certainly unaware of your worship' – because we have no

senses, no movement and no intelligence to understand these matters.

Described in the sixth verse (30) is what would happen to both the peoples of Jannah and Jahannam by saying that, in this excruciating place called the plains of Resurrection, everyone would have assessed his or her respective deeds, individually and personally, whether they were beneficial or harmful. And they all would then be taken to their true Lord, the only One worthy of worship. At that time, all options of trust and support one usually looks up to will stand terminated. Even the idols the Mushriks used to take as their patrons and intercessors will evaporate in thin air en-block.

In the seventh and the eighth verses (31,32), the Holy Qur'ān has, in its typically wise and patronizing manner, beamed a few questions at the Mushriks to help them regain their sanity. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it was said that he should ask these people: Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Who is the master-controller of your ears and eyes in that you hear and see as He wills and you do not if He wills otherwise? Who brings forth the living from the dead, such as vegetation and trees from the soil? Or, who brings forth humans and animals from the sperm, or a bird from an egg? And who brings forth the dead from the living, such as a lifeless sperm from humans and animals? And who is it that plans and manages the affairs of the whole universe?

After that, it was said when these questions will be addressed to them, all of them would say that all these things were created by One Allah! Then, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was to ask them: Why then, would you not fear Allah? When you know that it is Allah alone who creates, sustains and manages everything, why do you have to take someone else other than Him as deserving of your devotion and obedience?

In the concluding verse (32), it was said: فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ، فَمَا ذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ اِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ (So, that is Allah, your Lord in truth. And what is there, after truth, but error?), that is, 'this is the Sacred Being whose attributes of perfection have just been mentioned. Once you have found the Truth, there remains nothing else to find except error and straying. In other words, once it stands proved that Allah Ta'ālā is the only true and rightful object of worship, it is terribly senseless to abandon this truth and allow yourself to be diverted elsewhere.

An important note

In relation to issues of religious beliefs embedded in this verse, it must be borne in mind that the statement: مَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ (What is there, after truth, but error?) proves that there is no intermediary link between truth and error. What is not the truth will be included in error and straying. There can be no such thing that is neither truth nor error. And it is also not possible that two opposite things could be the truth. This is an established rule in the sight of the majority of scholars in the Muslim *Ummah*. However, difference exists among 'Ulamā' regarding minor and subsidiary juristic issues. In the view of some of them, both sides would be considered as on truth in Ijtihād-based issues and, according to the majority of them, there is consensus on the view that the taking of contra-position in Ijtihād-based problems cannot be termed as error and straying.

Verses 33 – 36

كَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ فَسَقُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
﴿٣٣﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ؕ قُلِ
اللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ
شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ لِلْحَقِّ ؕ اَفَمَنْ
يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّتَّبَعَ اَمَّنْ لَّا يَهِدِّيْٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّهْدٰى ۚ
فَمَا لَكُمْ ۛ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ اِلَّا ظَنًّا ؕ اِنَّ
الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِيْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ
﴿٣٦﴾

This is how the Word of your Lord that they will not believe is established against those who sinned. [33]

Say, "Is there any one from your associate-gods who originates the creation, then brings it again? Where then, are you being turned away?" [34] **Say, "Is there any one from your associate-gods who guides to the truth?" Say, "Allah guides to the truth. Is, then, He who guides to the truth more worthy of being obeyed, or he who has no guidance unless he is guided? So, what is the matter with you? How do you judge things?** [35]

And most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Surely, conjecture does not suffice against the truth in any way. Certainly, Allah is fully aware of what they do. [36]

Verses 37 - 40

وَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ اَنْ يُّفْتَرٰى مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ
الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِّثْلِهٖ
وَادْعُوْا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾
بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيْطُوْا بِعِلْمِهٖ وَلَمَّا يَاْتِهِمْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿٣٩﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِهٖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهٖ ؕ وَرَبُّكَ
اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ ع

And this Qur'ān is not such as could be made by someone other than Allah, but it is a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of what is written. There is no doubt in it. It is from the Lord of the worlds. [37]

Or, do they say that he has made it up? Say, "Then, bring a Sūrah like it, and call whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are true." [38]

But they have belied something of which they had no comprehensive knowledge, while its implications have not yet come to them. Likewise belied those before them. So, look how was the fate of the unjust. [39] **And among them there are those who believe in it, and among them there are others who do not believe in it. And your Lord has the best knowledge about the mischief-makers.** [40]

Verses 41 – 44

وَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ لِّىْ عَمَلِىْ وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ ۚ اَنْتُمْ بَرِيْٓـُٔوْنَ مِمَّآ
اَعْمَلُ وَاَنَا بَرِىْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ
اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ

مَنْ يَّنْظُرُ اِلَيْكَ ۭ اَفَاَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ
﴿٤٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْـًٔا وَّلٰكِنَّ النَّاسَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ
يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And if they belie you, say, "For me, my deed, and for you, your deed. You are not accountable for what I do and I am not accountable for what you do." [41]

And among them there are those who listen to you. Would you, then, make the deaf hear, even when they lack understanding? [42] **And among them there are those who look at you. Would you, then, guide the blind even when they have no insight?** [43]

Surely, Allah does not do wrong to people at all, but the people do wrong to their own selves. [44]

Verses 45 – 56

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُوْنَ
بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَاۗءِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ
﴿٤٥﴾ وَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا
مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰي مَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ
رَّسُوْلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَاۗءَ رَسُوْلُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ
لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ
﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا اِلَّا مَا شَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ ۭ
لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ۭ اِذَا جَاۗءَ اَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا
يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُهٗ بَيَاتًا اَوْ نَهَارًا
مَّاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ اَثُمَّ اِذَا مَا وَقَعَ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ ۭ
اٰۗلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ ثُمَّ قِيْلَ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا
ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ ۚ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾
وَيَسْتَنْۢبِـُٔـوْنَكَ اَحَقٌّ هُوَ ۭ قُلْ اِيْ وَرَبِّيْٓ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ ۭ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ

بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِۦ ۗ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم
بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾
هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

And the Day when He will gather them, (they will feel) like they had not stayed for any longer than a fraction of a day as they will recognize each other. Losers, indeed, are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, and they are not on the right path. [45]

So, no matter whether We show you some of what We warn them of, or We take you back to Us (before it), in any case, they have to return to Us. Then, Allah is witness to what they do. [46]

And for every people there is a messenger. So, when their messenger comes, the matter will be decided between them with justice, and they shall not be wronged. [47]

And they say, "When will this promise be (fulfilled) if you are true?" [48] **Say, "I have no power to bring a harm or a benefit to myself, except what Allah wills. For every people there is an appointed time. When their time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they be earlier.** [49]

Say, "Just tell me, if His punishment befalls you at night or by day, what is there in it that the sinners wish to come soon? [50]

Is it then when it befalls you that you will believe in it? Now (you believe)? And you have been asking for it to come sooner!" [51]

Then it will be said to the unjust, "Taste the punishment lasting for ever. You shall not be punished except for what you have been earning." [52]

And they want you to tell them whether it is true. Say, "Yes, by my Lord, it is true. And you cannot frustrate (His plan)." [53]

And if anyone who did wrong possesses all that there is on earth, he would ransom himself with it. And they will conceal their remorse when they will see the punishment. And the matter will be decided between them with justice and they will not be wronged. [54]

Look! To Allah belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth. Look! Allah's promise is certainly true, but most of them do not know. [55]

He gives life and brings death, and to Him you shall be returned. [56]

Commentary

In verse 45, it was said: يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ (they will recognize each other), that is, when the dead will be raised from their graves, they will recognize each other as if not much time had passed when they met last.

Imām al-Baghawī said: This recognition will be possible during the early stage. Later, when the horrendous happenings of the Qiyāmah, the Day of Doom, will unfold, this ability to recognize each other will stand disabled. According to some other narrations, the ability to recognize each other will, though, still remain, but such will be the awe of the situation that they will be unable to say anything. (Maẓharī)

It was said in verse 51: أَثُمَّ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ آلْئٰنَ It means: 'Would you believe when Divine punishment actually descends down upon you – whether at the time of death, or even before it? But, at that time, the response to your believing will be: آلْئٰنَ: ('al'ān: now?) meaning: Is it now that you have come to believe while the time of believing has already passed? This is similar to what the Pharaoh said while drowning: اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا الَّذِیٓ اٰمَنَتْ بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِیْلَ ("I believe that there is no god except the One in whom the Children of Isrā'īl believe – 10:90). In answer, it was said: آلْئٰنَ ('al'ān: now?) and this believing by him was not accepted. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said, 'Allah Ta'ālā keeps accepting the repentance of His servant until he is seized by the agony of death.' It means that believing and repenting at the time of the agony of death is not credible in the sight of Allah. Similarly, in the mortal world, Taubah (repentance) could be accepted if done before the actual falling of the Divine punishment. Once the punishment strikes, Taubah is not accepted. The event related to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus علیہ السلام going to appear towards the end of the Sūrah in which their

Taubah was accepted falls under this very rule. They had seen the punishment coming from a distance. Moved earnestly, weeping and wailing, they made their Taubah in all sincerity. Therefore, the punishment was withdrawn. Had it struck them, their Taubah would have remained unaccepted.

Verses 57 – 61

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُم مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِى
الصُّدُورِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ
وَبِرَحْمَتِهِۦ فَبِذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا۟ ط هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلْ
أَرَءَيْتُم مَّآ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُم مِّن رِّزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُم مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا
وَحَلَٰلًا ط قُلْ ءَآللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَمَا ظَنُّ
الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَٰمَةِ ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ
لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ ع وَمَا
تَكُونُ فِى شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُوا۟ مِنْهُ مِن قُرْءَانٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ
عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ ط وَمَا يَعْزُبُ
عَن رَّبِّكَ مِن مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِى الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِى السَّمَآءِ وَلَآ
أَصْغَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ وَلَآ أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِى كِتَٰبٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٦١﴾

O men, there has come to you an advice from your Lord, and a cure for what is in your hearts, and guidance and mercy for the believers. [57]

Say, "With the grace of Allah and with His mercy" – with these they should rejoice. It is far better than what they accumulate. [58]

Say, "Tell me, whatever provision Allah has sent down for you, you have made out from it lawful and unlawful." Say, "Has Allah permitted you or are you fabricating a lie on Allah?" [59]

And what is the assumption of those who fabricate a lie on Allah (about) the Day of Doom? Surely, Allah is all gracious to people, but most of them are not grateful. [60]

And in whatever condition you are, and whatever portion of the Qur'ān you recite therein, and whatever work you (all) do, We are present before you when you are involved in it. And hidden from your Lord is nothing even to the measure of a particle on the earth or in the heavens. And there is nothing smaller or greater that is not there in the clear Book. [61]

Commentary

Previous verses described how astray the disbelievers and polytheists had gone and what punishments had become due against them in the Hereafter.

Shown to them in the first two verses was the way out of their living in error and also the source through which they would find deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. And that source is Qur'ān, the Book of Allah, and His Messenger, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

Both are great blessings for humanity, far superior to the entire blessings of the heavens and the earth. Following the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم go on to make human beings human in the real sense – and when this human person becomes the perfect man in the real sense, the whole world corrects and reorders itself like a paradise on earth.

The first (57) of the five verses cited above mentions four attributes of the Holy Qur'ān:

1. ADVICE as in مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (an advice from your Lord).

The real meaning of the word: موعظه (*maw'iẓah*) and: وعظ (*wa'ẓ*) is to delineate such things as would make one's heart soft and receptive. As a result, it would incline towards Allah Ta'ālā. The barrier of heedlessness acquired from excessive indulgence in worldly life will stand removed. Ultimately, this advice would result in the flowering of a personal concern for what would happen in Ākhirah, the life ahead. The Holy Qur'ān, from the beginning to the end, is an eloquent preacher of this very good counsel. See anywhere, you will find promise with warning, reward with punishment, and prosperity and success in Dunyā and Ākhirah with a corresponding fate due to error and straying. Appearing recurrently in varying shades and blending, it generates a powerful appeal which has the ability to make a heart stone-hard turn soft and pliable like water all ready to absorb the message. Of course,

on top of everything, there is the miraculous diction of the Holy Qur'ān that, by itself, has a class of its own in the matter of reversal of hearts.

The complement of: مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (from your Lord) with موعظه (advice) has elevated the status of Qur'ānic advice to a much higher level. It is telling us that this advice is not coming from a helpless human being that does not hold the keys to anyone's profit and loss or reward and punishment, nor has any credibility of his own. Instead, the advice is from the merciful Lord whose Word admits of no error, and whose promise and warning too are free of any apprehension of some weakness or excuse.

2. CURE as in: شِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِى الصُّدُوْرِ (a cure for what is in your hearts).

The word: شفاء (*shifā'*) means the removal of disease and: صدور (*ṣudūr*) is the plural form of: صدر (*ṣadr*) which means the chest, and it signifies the heart.

The sense is that the Holy Qur'ān is a successful remedy of the diseases of the heart. It corrects and cures it as a prescription of legendary elixir would. The famous Ḥasan al-Basrī said, 'from this attribute of the Qur'ān, we learn that it is a cure for the diseases of the heart specifically, and not that of physical diseases. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

But, other scholars have said that the Holy Qur'ān is a cure for every disease, whether spiritual or physical. However, spiritual diseases are far more harmful for men and women than physical diseases. Then, the treatment of such diseases too is not in everyone's control. Therefore, at this place, only spiritual diseases that relate to the heart have been mentioned. From this it does not necessarily follow that it is not a cure for physical diseases.

Ḥadīth reports and countless experiments of the religious scholars of the Muslim community are witnesses to the fact that the way the Holy Qur'ān is a great elixir for diseases of the heart, very similarly, it is the best of treatments for physical diseases also.

As narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه, someone came to Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and complained that he felt he had a chest problem. He said, 'recite the Qur'ān, for Allah Ta'ālā says: شِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِى الصُّدُوْرِ that is, 'the Qur'ān is a cure for all such diseases as are found insides chests.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūwayh)

Similarly, according to the narration of Sayyidnā Wāthilah ibn Asqa‘ رضی اللہ عنہ, someone came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and said that he had a throat problem. He told him the same thing – ‘recite the Qur’ān’.

Scholars of the Muslim community have compiled the properties and efficacies of the Qur’ānic verses in regular books by extracting these partly from narratives of Ḥadīth and the sayings of the Ṣaḥābah, and partly from their own experiments and experience. Imām al-Ghazāli’s work on ‘Qur’ānic Properties’ is well known in this area. Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānavī’s “A‘māl-i-Qur’ānii, an abridgement of this work, has been popular among readers of Urdu for over fifty years. Then, there are so many observations and experiments in this field which prove that different verses of the Holy Qur’ān have been a total cure for physical diseases as well. Denying all of them is not possible. However, this much can be conceded that the real purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur’ān is to remove the diseases of the heart and soul while, as a corollary, it is also the most effective treatment of even physical diseases.

This also tells us that those who recite the Holy Qur’ān only to treat physical diseases or to seek nothing but the fulfillment of worldly needs are low in sense and high in waywardness. Such people never bother to correct spiritual diseases, nor do they pay any heed to the need of doing things in accordance with the instructions given by the Qur’ān. For such people, Iqbāl said:

ترا حاصل زیس اش جزین نیست　　　　که ازهم خواندنش آسان بمیری

Your gain from *Yā Sīn* is but that:

By reciting it, death becomes easy.

Though, he is suggesting, had you pondered over its meaning and message, realities and insights, you would have gained much more of its benefits and blessings.

Some research-oriented commentators who have gone deeper into the meanings of the Qur’ān have said that the first attribute of the Qur’ān, that is, موعظه (*maw‘iẓah*: advice, good counsel) relates to man’s obvious, outward or physically-accomplished deeds known as the Sharī‘ah. The Holy Qur’ān is the best source of the correction and betterment of such deeds. Then, the second attribute: شِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِی الصُّدُوْرِ (a cure for

what is in your hearts) relates to man's hidden, inward or heart-oriented deeds known as *Ṭarīqah* and *Taṣawwuf*.

3. GUIDANCE as in: وهدى (and guidance).

The word: هدى (*hudā*) means guidance or the showing of or leading onto the way. The Holy Qur'ān invites human beings to the way of truth and faith. It invites them to ponder over the great signs Allah Ta'ālā has placed in the near and far ranges of the world, even inside their own person, [staggering would certainly be the interior distances of the universe within us] and recognize the creator and master of everything.

4. MERCY as in ورحمة (and mercy for the believers).

In the second verse (58), it was said: قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوْا ، هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ (Say, "With the grace of Allah and with His mercy" – in these they should rejoice. It is far better than what they accumulate). The sense of the verse is that people should take only the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā as the real thing to be delighted about and be pleased with it. As for the short-lived worldly wealth, possession, comfort and recognition, these are things not worth being happy about in the real sense. Because, to start with, no matter how much one has, it turns out to be not as much as one would have wished. It becomes a cycle that never ends. Then, there is that ever-lurking danger that it may start declining any time. Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ (It is far better than what they accumulate). Thus, the core of the meaning is that the grace and mercy of Allah is far better than the layers upon layers of wealth and property and worldly recognition and power one accumulates as the sum-total of one's entire life.

Two things have been identified as a source of delight in this verse, one being grace, and the other, mercy. What do these two mean here? Regarding this, there is a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه where it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'the فضل :*faḍl* (grace) of Allah denotes the Qur'ān and: رحمة : *raḥmah* (mercy) means that you were blessed with the *taufīq* (ability) of reciting the Qur'ān and acting in accordance with it.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūwayh)

The same thing has also been reported from Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib and Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنهم اجمعين while there are

many commentators who say that *fadl* (grace) means the Qur'an while *rahmah* (mercy) signifies Islam. However, the sense remains the same as given in the Hadith appearing earlier, that is, *rahmah* (mercy) means that Allah Ta'ala taught us the Qur'an, gave us the *taufiq* to follow it practically, and that is what Islam is in reality.

And Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that *fadl* means the Qur'an, and *rahmah* refers to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. This interpretation finds support in the verse of the Holy Qur'an where it is said: وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحۡمَةٗ لِّلۡعَٰلَمِينَ (And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as mercy for the worlds – 21:107). However, the outcome of this too is no different from the earlier *tafsir* – because, acting in accordance with the Qur'an, or Islam ultimately reverts to following the lead given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم through his word and deed.

In this verse, the word: فَلۡيَفۡرَحُوا (they should rejoice) has appeared in the third person in accordance with its well-known rendition (*qira'ah*), although its real addressees were those present there or were living at that time. The exigency of the situation required that the form used should have been that in the second person – as it does actually appear in some renditions. But, the wisdom behind the use of the third person, as in the well-known rendition, is that the universal mercy of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, or Islam, was not restricted only to those present there, or living at that time. Instead, it included even the generations that will be born right through the last day of Qiyamah. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

Special Note

At this point it is worth our attention that there is another verse of the Qur'an which, in terms of its outward literal sense, seems to indicate that this world is just no place for any highly stimulated expression of joy and merriment. It was said: لَا تَفۡرَحۡ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلۡفَرِحِينَ (Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant – Al-Qasas 28:76). The word: لاتفرح (*la tafrah*) translated here as 'do not exult' means rejoicing in triumph or intoxication. But, in the verse under study (58), the command to rejoice appears in the imperative mood. One answer for this seemingly apparent contradiction is that the place where rejoicing has been prohibited is a place where rejoicing relates to the fleeting enjoyments of the mortal world. And the place where rejoicing is commanded is a

place where rejoicing is related to the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. Then, there is yet another difference here. Wherever rejoicing is prohibited, it does not refer to rejoicing in the absolute sense. Instead, it means getting euphoric and intoxicated in exultation and rejoicing. And wherever permitted, it means rejoicing in an absolute sense.

In the third verse (59), warning has been given to people who introduce their personal opinion in the serious matter of Ḥalāl (lawful) and Ḥarām (unlawful). They would, at will, declare something to be Ḥalāl and dub something to be Ḥarām – without any authority of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. A severe warning of no less a punishment than that of the day of Qiyāmah has been given to those who commit this crime (60). This tells us that the fact of something being Ḥalāl or Ḥarām does not depend on human opinion. Instead of that, it is the special right and prerogative of Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger. Without their injunctions, it is not permissible to call something either Ḥalāl or Ḥarām.

In the fifth verse (61), mention has been made of the all-encompassing knowledge of the most exalted Allah and its unmatched multi-dimensional extensions. The address is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He is being told that nothing he does by way of his work or recital of the Qur'ān remains hidden from Allah. Similarly, whatever all human beings do remains before Him. And not even a single particle in the heavens and the earth is concealed from Him. Rather, everything is written in the clear Book, that is, the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*).

At this place, as it seems, the wisdom of describing the all-encompassing nature of Divine knowledge is aimed at consoling the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that his enemies cannot harm him in any way for he was under the protection of Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 62 – 64

أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ ٱللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَكَانُوا۟ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ لَهُمُ ٱلْبُشْرَىٰ فِى ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ
ٱلدُّنْيَا وَفِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ ٱلْفَوْزُ
ٱلْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٤﴾

Listen, the friends of Allah shall have no fear nor shall they grieve [62] **– those who have believed and have been fearful of Allah.** [63] **For them there is the good news in the worldly life and in the Hereafter – there is no change in the words of Allah – that is the great achievement.** [64]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, particular merits, definition and identity of the Auliyā' of Allah have been mentioned. Also given there is good news for them in the present world as well as in the Hereafter. The text says that they will have no apprehensions of facing some unpleasant or unforeseen happening, nor will they grieve over the non-fulfillment of some objective. These *Auliyā'* of Allah (men of Allah) will be people who believed and remained pious, righteous and God-fearing. They are most welcome in this world and in the next world both.

We have to consider three things at this point:

1. What is the meaning of Auliyā' of Allah having no fear and grief?
2. What is the definition of Auliyā' of Allah? How does one identify them?
3. What does the good news given to them in Dunyā and Ākhirah mean?

First of all, the Auliyā' of Allah have no fear or grief. This could possibly mean when they are admitted to their allocated place in Paradise, after having gone through the accounting of deeds in the Hereafter, they will stand delivered from fear and grief forever. They will have no apprehension of any pain or anxiety nor will they have to grieve for having lost something dear to them. Instead, the blessings of Paradise will be everlasting. Given this sense, there is no difficulty in rationalizing the subject of the verse. But, it does, however, raise a question. If this be the case, it registers no peculiarity of the Auliyā' of Allah. In fact, all people of Paradise who stand delivered from Hell will be enjoying that very state of being. Yes, it can, then, be said that those who ultimately reach Paradise will all be known as the Auliyā' of Allah invariably. No matter how different their deeds had been in the mortal world but, once they have entered Paradise, all of them will be

counted among the Auliyā' of Allah.

But, many commentators say that freedom from fear and grief with which the Auliyā' of Allah are blessed is common to the present world and the Hereafter both. The thing unique about the Auliyā' of Allah is that they remain protected from fear and grief even in the present world, and that they will have no fear and grief in the Hereafter is something everyone knows. So, included therein are all people of Paradise.

Apart from that, in terms of relevant prevailing conditions, we have yet another difficulty on our hands. Observations in the world of our experience bear out that – not to mention the Auliyā' of Allah – even the Prophets of Allah, may peace be on them, are not secure from fear and grief in this mortal world. In fact, their fear of and humbleness before Allah is far more pronounced as compared to others. It was said in the Qur'ān: إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا (Among Our servants only those who have knowledge (really) fear Allah – 35:28). At another place, the emotional state of the righteous and the men of Allah has been described in the following words: وَالَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (And those who are fearful of the punishment of their Lord – indeed, the punishment of their Lord is not to be unfearful of – 70:27) that is, no one can sit home comfortably in the knowledge that it is due to come.

This is borne by facts as well as it appears in a Ḥadīth of Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would more than often look concerned and pensive'. And he himself said, 'I fear Allah more than all of you.'

There are countless events relating to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the rest of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the wide spectrum of the men of Allah which tell us how intensely they grieved and how genuinely they feared what would happen to them in the Hereafter.

Therefore, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has said in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī: That the Auliyā' Allah are protected against fear and grief in the mortal world has to be seen in terms of what usually happens here. There are things worldly people generally fear or grieve about most of the time. They are chronically addicted to their mundane agenda of life. They have to

have convenience, comfort, wealth and recognition. The slightest shortfall in any of these makes them nervous as if they were going to die without that. The fear of a minor discomfort or anxiety drives them crazy and they will go about finding ways and means to get rid of such irritants. The station of the Auliyā', friends or men of Allah is way higher. In their sight, convenience, comfort, wealth and recognition one surrounds himself with in this transitory world are not worth their while that they go about acquiring these. Nor do they care much about the anxieties of the mundane and see no need to beef up their defenses against these. Their life style admits of nothing but the recognition of His greatness and love for Him. So overshadowed they are with the fear of Allah and their humbleness before Him that they just have no use for worldly sorrow and comfort or profit and loss.

Now we can go to the matter of the definition of Auliyā' Allah and the marks of their identification. The word: اولیاء (*Auliyā'*) is the plural form of: ولی (*waliyy*, commonly rendered as the simpler: *walī*, which bypasses the need to render the doubling of the *yā* sound at the end shown by the addition of a 'y', or two, as purists would prefer to do). The word: ولی (*waliyy*) is used in the Arabic language in the dual sense of 'near' as well as 'friend' or someone held 'dear.' The common degree of nearness and love as related to Allah Ta'ālā is such as would not leave any living entity, human or non-human, exempt from it. If this element of nearness were not there, nothing would have come into being in this universe. The real justification for the existence of this entire universe is that particular interrelationship which it has been allowed to have by Allah in His absolute majesty. Though, no one has understood the reality of this interrelationship, nor is it possible to do so, but that a non-definable interrelationship does exist is certain. However, this degree is not what is actually meant in the term: Auliyā' Allah. In fact, there is yet another degree of friendship, love and nearness that is specific to particular servants of Allah Ta'ālā. This is known as nearness in love. Those who are blessed with this nearness are called the *Auliyā' Allah*. This has been succinctly articulated in a *Qudsī* Ḥadīth where Allah Ta'ālā says, 'My servant keeps earning My nearness through voluntary acts of worship (*nafl 'ibādāt*) until I too turn to him in love and when I love him, I become his ear – whatever he hears, he hears through Me. I become his eye – whatever he sees, he sees through Me. I become his hands and feet – whatever he does,

he does through Me.' In short, it means that virtually nothing issues forth from such a person against the pleasure of his Lord.

The degrees of this unique *Wilāyah* (station of nearness or friendship) are endless. Its highest degree is for the blessed prophets because every prophet has to be, of necessity, a *Waliyy* of Allah. In this degree, the highest station belongs to the foremost among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Then, the lowest degree of this *Wilāyah*, in the terminology of the noble Sufis, is known as the degree of Fanā' (self-elimination: I am nothing – He is everything). It makes the heart of man become so engrossed in the thought of Allah Ta'ālā that it would not allow any love rooted in this world to overcome it. When such a person loves, he loves for the sake of Allah. When he hates, he hates for the sake of Allah. His own person plays no part in this love and hate cycle, the inevitable outcome of which is that he keeps busy in his quest for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā both outwardly and inwardly. This style of living makes him avoid everything which is not liked in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. The sign of this state of existence is abundance of *Dhikr* and constancy in obedience – in other words, to remember Allah Ta'ālā abundantly and profusely, and to obey His injunctions always, and under all conditions and circumstances. When these two attributes are present in a person, he is called a *Waliyy* of Allah. Whoever does not have any one of the two is not included in that category. Then, whoever has both, there is no limit to his ranks, lower and higher. It is in terms of these degrees that the ranks of Auliyā' Allah precede or succeed each other.

On the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported in a Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was asked as to who were the people meant by '*Auliyā' Allah*' in this verse? He said, 'those who love each other only for Allah – without having any worldly interest in between.' (Maẓharī, quoted from Ibn Mardūwayh). It is obvious that this condition can apply only to those who have been mentioned above.

At this stage, we have another question before us: What is the method of acquiring this degree of *Wilāyah* (nearness to Allah)?

Respected commentator, Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī has said in Tafsīr Maẓharī: Individuals from the Muslim Ummah could acquire this degree of Wilayah only through the company of the Holy Prophet صلی

الله عليه وسلم. It is from here that the profound relationship with Allah, which was part of the blessed persona of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, is partly passed on to the *Auliyā'* of the Ummah, of course, depending on their ambition and capacity for whatever portion from it falls to their lot. Then, we know that this benefit of companionship was available to the Ṣaḥābah without anyone being in between. Therefore, the degree of their Wilāyah was higher than that of all Auliyā' and *aqṭāb* (plural of *quṭb*, literally axis, meaning a man of Allah who stays at one place, as in Ṣūfī orders). Later people derive this benefit through one or more intermediaries. The more the intermediaries, the more pronounced becomes the difference. Only those who are colored with the color of the word, deed and message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and follow his Sunnah, in all love and obedience, can become such an intermediary. Going to them, frequenting their company with the added practice of listening to their good counsel, remaining obedient and remembering Allah abundantly – this is the blueprint of attaining the degree of Wilāyah. It is made of three parts. One: Being in the company of a *Waliyy* of Allah. Two: Remaining obedient to his good counsel. Three: Remembering Allah abundantly (*Dhikrullāh*) – with the condition that this abundance (and nature) of *Dhikr* must be in accordance with the *masnūn* method. The reason is that *Dhikr*, when frequent and sincere, adds to the luster of the mirror of the heart and it becomes worthy of receiving reflections from the light of *Wilāyah*. It appears in Ḥadīth that everything has a method of furbishing it. Dhikrullah furbishes the heart. The same thing has been reported by al-Baihaqī as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said that a person asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: 'what would you say about a person who loves someone spiritually noble but is unable to reach up to his level in terms of his own deeds?' He said: اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ that is, 'everyone shall be with one he loves'. This tells us that the love and company of the Auliyā' Allah is a source of acquiring Wilāyah (nearness to Allah). Al-Baihaqī (in Shu'ab al-'Īmān) has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to Sayyidnā Razīn رضى الله عنه: 'I tell you about a principle of Faith. With it you can attain success in *Dunyā* and *Ākhirah*: Take to the company of *ahl adh-Dhikr* (people who remember Allah) as indispensable, and when you are alone, move your tongue with the *Dhikr* of Allah, as much as you can. Whoever you love, do it for Allah. Whoever

you hate, do it for Allah. (Maẓharī)

But, in order to be beneficial, this 'company' has to be of those who are, in themselves, the Waliyy of Allah and staunch followers of Sunnah. Those who do not observe and follow the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (and do not demonstrate by their word and deed that they are operating under it) are themselves deprived of the essential degree of *Wilāyah*. It does not matter if many a contra-habitual wonders (*kashf* and *karāmāt*) issue forth from them. They will still be considered deprived. However, if someone is a Waliyy in terms of the stated attributes – even though, nothing of the sort has ever issued forth from him – he is a Waliyy of Allah. (Maẓharī)

Now we come to the last point. What are the signs of the Auliyā' Allah? How can they be identified? A Qudsī Ḥadīth referred to in Tafsīr Maẓharī points out in this direction. Allah Ta'ālā said: 'From among My servants, My Auliyā' are those who are remembered when I am remembered and when they are remembered I am remembered.' According to a narration from Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd reported in Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave the identity of Auliyā' Allah by saying: اَلَّذِيْنَ اِذَا رُءُوْا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ (those who, when one sees them, remind of Allah).

In short, there is someone by sitting in whose company one gets the *taufīq* of remembering Allah (*Dhikr*), and relief from worldly concerns, then, this is a sign of his being a *Waliyy* of Allah.

It has been said in Tafsīr Maẓharī: There is a prevailing assumption among masses that things like getting to know what is hidden (*kashf*), doing some extra-ordinary things (*karāmah*) or claiming to be aware of what is *al-Ghayb* (Unseen) are signs of someone being among the Auliyā' of Allah. This is nothing but error and self-deception. There are thousands of Auliyā' who are not credited with anything like this, that could be termed as authentically proved while, in sharp contrast, reports of things otherwise hidden and unseen are accredited to those whose very basic *'Īmān* (belief) is not correct!

It was said in the last verse (64) that, for the friends of Allah, there is the good news in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. As for the good news of the Hereafter, it will come at the time of death when the

spirit of the deceased will be taken to Allah. At that time, he will hear the good news of Paradise being for him. Then, on the day of Qiyāmah, when he rises from his grave, he will receive the good news of being welcome to Paradise. This is similar to what al-Ṭabarānī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه. He narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'People who recite: لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ (*lā ilāha illallāh*: There is no god but Allah) will not experience any fright at the time of death, nor inside the grave, nor at the time they rise from it. This is as if my eyes are seeing the scenario of that time when these people will, shaking the dust off, rise from their graves, saying: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ (Praised is Allah who has removed from us [all] grief – 35:34)'

As for the good news in this world, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, '(they are) the true dreams one sees himself or are seen by someone else with him in it and, in which, there is good news for them. (Reported by al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه).

Another *bashārah* (good news) of this world unfolds in the form that Muslims at large love someone and take him to be good without any personal motive or interest. About it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ that is, 'being taken as good and praiseworthy is, for a true Muslim, good news in ready cash.' (Muslim and al-Baghawī)

Verses 65 – 66

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ۭ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٦٥﴾ اَلَآ إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ۭ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And what they say should not make you grieve. Surely, all power belongs to Allah. He is All-Hearing, All Knowing. [65]

Listen, to Allah belong all those in the heavens and all those on the earth. And what do follow those who invoke associate-gods other than Allah? They follow nothing but whims and do nothing but make conjectures. [66]

Verses 67 – 70

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۚ إِنَّ
فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا
سُبْحَانَهُ ۖ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ ۖ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنْ
عِندَكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ بِهَٰذَا ۚ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ
﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ
﴿٦٩﴾ مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُذِيقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ
الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

He is the One who made for you the night, so that you may have rest in it, and (made) the day to see. Indeed, there are signs therein for a people who listen. [67]

They say, "Allah has got a son." Pure is He. He is Self-Sufficient. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. You have no proof for it. Do you allege about Allah what you do not know? [68]

Say: Those who fabricate against Allah shall not prosper. [69] **A little enjoyment in this world then, to Us is their return, then, We shall make them taste the severe punishment, because they used to disbelieve.** [70]

Verses 71 – 73

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُم
مَّقَامِي وَتَذْكِيرِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا
أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا
إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ ﴿٧١﴾ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُم مِّنْ أَجْرٍ ۖ إِنْ
أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾
فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَمَن مَّعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ
وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُنذَرِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

And recite to them the story of Nūḥ, when he said to his people, "O my people, if it is hard on you that I stay (with you) and give (you) advice through the signs of Allah, then, in Allah I place my trust. So, decide your matter along with your partners, then, your design should not be a matter of regret to you, then carry it out against me and give me no respite. [71] **So, if you turn away, then, I have asked for no reward from you. My reward is with none except Allah, and I have been commanded to be among those who submit."** [72]

Then they belied him, and We saved him and those with him in the Ark and made them the successors and drowned those who belied Our signs. So look how was the fate of those who were warned. [73]

Verse 74

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَآءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا
كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْا بِمَا كَذَّبُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلٰى
قُلُوْبِ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Then, after him, We sent messengers to their peoples, and they came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier. This is how We seal the hearts of the transgressors. [74]

Verses 75 - 82

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ مُّوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ
بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ
الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ مُوْسٰٓى
اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَكُمْ ؕ اَسِحْرٌ هٰذَا ؕ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السّٰحِرُوْنَ
﴿٧٧﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا وَتَكُوْنَ
لَكُمَا الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾
وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ائْتُوْنِىْ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَ
السَّحَرَةُ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰٓى اَلْقُوْا مَآ اَنْتُمْ مُّلْقُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ فَلَمَّآ

أَلْقَوْا قَالَ مُوسَىٰ مَا جِئْتُم بِهِ السِّحْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيُبْطِلُهُ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَيُحِقُّ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ
وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Then, after them, We sent Mūsā and Hārūn with Our signs to Pharaoh and his group, but they showed arrogance. And they surely were a guilty people. [75]

So, when Truth came to them from Us, they said, "It is certainly a clear magic." [76] **Mūsā said, "Do you say (this) about the Truth when it came to you? Is this magic, while the magicians do not succeed?"** [77]

They said, "Have you come to us that you may turn us from what we found our fathers on, and that you both have supremacy on earth? We are not going to believe in you." [78]

And the Pharaoh said, "Bring to me every knowledgeable magician." [79]

So, when the magicians came, Mūsā said to them, "Throw what you have to throw." [80]

So, when they threw, Mūsā said, "What you have come up with is magic. Allah will certainly nullify it. It is sure that Allah does not let sustain the work of the mischief-makers. [81] **And Allah establishes the truth through His words, even though the guilty may dislike it.** [82]

Verses 83 – 86

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَىٰ إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّن قَوْمِهِ عَلَىٰ خَوْفٍ مِّن فِرْعَوْنَ
وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَن يَفْتِنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ
الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كُنتُمْ آمَنتُم بِاللَّهِ
فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنتُم مُّسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَقَالُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ
تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَنَجِّنَا
بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Then, except an offspring of his people, no one believed in Mūsā for the fear of Pharaoh and his group, lest he

should prosecute them. And the Pharaoh was high-handed in the land and he was of those who crossed all limits. [83]

And Mūsā said, " O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then, in Him put your trust if you are obedient." [84] **So, they said, "In Allah we have put our trust: Our Lord, do not make us a victim of the unjust people,** [85] **and save us, through Your mercy, from the disbelieving people."** [86]

Verses 87 – 91

وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰى وَاَخِيْهِ اَنْ تَبَوَّاٰ لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوْتًا
وَّاجْعَلُوْا بُيُوْتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿٨٧﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ اٰتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَاَهٗ زِيْنَةً
وَّاَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِكَ ۚ رَبَّنَا
اطْمِسْ عَلٰٓى اَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى
يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿٨٨﴾ قَالَ قَدْ اُجِيْبَتْ دَّعْوَتُكُمَا
فَاسْتَقِيْمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعٰٓنِّ سَبِيْلَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَجٰوَزْنَا
بِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْبَحْرَ فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ بَغْيًا وَّعَدْوًا ؕ
حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَتْ
بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَاَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ آٰلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ
قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā and his brother: "Have houses for your people in Egypt and make your houses worship oriented, and establish *Ṣalāh*, and give good tidings to the believers." [87]

And Mūsā said, "Our Lord, You have given Pharaoh and his group glamour and riches in the worldly life, so that, our Lord, they mislead (people) from Your path. Our Lord, obliterate their riches and harden their hearts, so that they may not come to believe until they witness the painful punishment." [88]

Allah said, "The prayer of you both has been granted, so stand firm and never follow the way of those who do not know." [89]

And We made the children of Isrā'īl cross the sea. So, Pharaoh and his troops chased them in transgression and hostility, until when he was about to drown, he said, "I believe that there is no god but the One in whom the children of Isrā'īl believe, and I am among those who submit." [90] **Is it Now (that you come to believe) while you were rebellious before and you were among the mischief-makers?** [91]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing immediately above, there are some circumstantial details along with their corresponding injunctions as they relate to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليهما السلام and the children of Isrā'īl and the people of the Pharaoh. The first verse (87) carries an injunction pertaining to a particular event. Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl) who observed the religious law of Sayyidnā Mūsā used to perform their prayers only in their synagogues as customary. Then, the past communities were also bound by this injunction. Their prayers were not valid if performed in their homes. The Muslim Ummah was the special recipient of the convenience that they could, if needed, perform their prayers everywhere as they wished. In a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, out of his six singularities, given one as, 'the whole earth has been made a *masjid* for me.' It means that Ṣalāh performed anywhere remains valid. However, it is something else that the performing of obligatory prayers in congregation only in *masjids* has been declared as an emphasized Sunnah. Then, saying *nafl* prayers inside homes is better. This was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He would say only the Farḍ Ṣalāh in the Masjid then go home and say his *sunnahs* and *nafls* there. As for the Banī Isrā'īl, they were bound to offer their prayers only in their synagogues in obedience to their religious laws. Realizing this, the Pharaoh who used to oppress them in all sorts of ways had all synagogues demolished so that they could be deprived of offering their prayers in accordance with their religious laws. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā sent to the two prophets of Banī Isrā'īl, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام, may peace be on them both, the injunction mentioned in

verse 87. It was said there that new houses should be built in Egypt for Banī Isrā'īl and that their orientation should be towards the Qiblah so that prayers could be offered in those very residential houses.

This tells us that the religious law of past communities demanded that prayers should be offered in houses of worship specifically built for this purpose. But it was because of a particular incident that the Banī Isrā'īl were temporarily allowed to offer their prayers at home and, for this purpose, they were to have houses oriented towards the Qiblah. And it can also be said that even at this time of emergency they were allowed to offer their prayers in particular houses that were oriented towards the Qiblah. Praying in common homes and public places was still not permitted even at that time. It was unlike the Muslim community that has the convenience of offering their prayers anywhere, be it a city or wilderness. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

It will be good to answer another question at this point. In this verse, the Banī Isrā'īl have been commanded to orient themselves towards the Qiblah. Which Qiblah is this? The Ka'bah or the Baytu 'l-Maqdis? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says, 'it means the Ka'bah and the Ka'bah alone was the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام and his people.' (al-Qurṭubī and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) In fact, some religious scholars say that the real Qiblah of all past prophets was no other but the Ka'bah.

As for the Ḥadīth where it is said that the Jews turn their faces towards the Sakhrah (the Rock) of Baytu 'l-Maqdis during their prayers, it will be applied to the time when Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام left Egypt and headed towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis. This is not contrary to his Qiblah being the Baytullāh during the period of his stay in Egypt.

It is also proved from this verse that the condition of facing towards the Qiblah was operative also during the period of past prophets. Similarly, it also stands proved from authentic reports that purity (*ṭahārah*) and body cover (*satr al-'aurah*) were conditions of Ṣalāh even in the religious laws of all past prophets.

Since the very purpose of making houses Qiblah oriented was to pray in there, therefore, by giving the command: 'Establish Ṣalāh' (اَقِیْمُوا الصَّلٰوۃَ) after that, the instruction given was: If the Pharaoh stops you from making prayers in places reserved for worship, prayers do not

stand dropped. Make these in your homes.

At the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been asked to convey the good news to believers that their mission will be successful. They will overpower the enemy and they will go to Paradise in the Hereafter. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

It will be noted that, at the beginning of the verse, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام may peace be upon them both, were addressed in the dual form because they both were charged with the responsibility of having houses made Qiblah oriented and allowing occupants to pray in there. After that, by using the plural form which included all Banī Isrā'īl, command was given to establish Ṣalāh – because, this law included all, the prophet and his community. At the end, the command to convey the good news was given particularly to Sayyidnā Mūsā – because, it was he, as the law-giving prophet, who had the right to give out the good news of Paradise.

Mentioned in the second verse (88), there is a curse which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام invoked after having lost all hopes of reforming the people of the Pharaoh. At its beginning, he submitted before his Lord that He had given the Pharaoh and his group glamour and riches in their worldly life (mines of gold, silver and precious stones in Egypt and Ethiopia – al-Qurṭubī). As a result, they misled people from His way. Because, common-people, when they looked at their bulging affluence, they started doubting – had they been in error, why would they have been so blessed? Again, because common-people were unable to see through the reality that material affluence without good deeds cannot be the sign of a person being right and true. It was only after having been disappointed with his efforts to correct the people of the Pharaoh, and having realized the danger it posed for other people who were being misled by the glamour and wealth of the Pharaoh's group that he invoked the curse: رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلٰٓى اَمْوَالِهِمْ (Our Lord, obliterate their riches).

According to the statement of Sayyidnā Qatādah رحمه الله , such was the effect of this invocation that all gold, precious coins, stones, land produce belonging to Pharaoh's people were transformed into bland rocks. In a bag found during the period of the pious Khalīfah Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رحمه الله there were things dating back to the time of the Pharaoh. Seen in it, there were eggs and almonds of solid rock.

Leading commentators say that Allah Taʻālā had turned all fruits, vegetables and grains they had into rocks. This is among the nine *āyāt* (signs or miracles) mentioned in the Qur'ān as in: وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ بَيِّنٰتٍ (and We gave Mūsā [Moses] nine clear signs – 17:101).

The second curse invoked by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for them appears in the words: وَاشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ (and harden their hearts, so that [they are deprived of the very ability to receive any good and] they may not come to believe until they witness the painful punishment – 88).

The invocation of this curse obviously appears to be something far out as coming through the speech of an apostle or prophet, because the sole mission of a prophet's life is nothing but to invite people to believe and act right and make efforts towards that end.

But, in terms of the hard facts of the situation here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has already made whatever efforts he could. He was totally disappointed. Now he wanted that they better learn through the punishment for their deeds. In doing so, it was probable that these people, once they see the punishment coming, may make a confession and declare that they now believed, whereby the punishment could stand warded off. Therefore, what became the cause of this invocation from him was his hatred for *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity). This is similar to what happened to the Pharaoh. When he started to announce his belief at the time he was drowning, the angel, Jibra'īl shut his mouth lest Divine mercy turns to him and he stands delivered from the punishment.

In the third verse (89), it was said that the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been accepted. But, by taking Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as associated with the act of prayer, the actual address was made in the words: قَدْ اُجِيْبَتْ دَّعْوَتُكُمَا (The prayer of you both has been granted). There was a reason for it. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was making this prayer, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام kept saying Āmīn (Amen). This tells us that the saying of Āmīn (so be it) is also a part of the prayer itself. And since the *masnūn* method of *duʻā* or prayer given in the Holy Qur'ān is that of making it in a lowered voice, the saying of *Āmīn* too in a lowered mode seems to be preferable.

As for the acceptance of prayer, the information was given to the

two prophets as it appears in this verse. But, even they were somewhat tested in that the effect of the prayer, according to al-Baghawī, unfolded after forty years. For this reason, soon after the mention of the acceptance of their prayer in this verse, they both were given the instruction: فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَآنِّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (so stand firm, and never follow the way of those who do not know). It means that they should go on carrying the mission of calling people to the true faith and do not get embarrassed, disappointed or hasty like the ignorant when the effects of the acceptance of some prayer takes its due time.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (90) was the famous miracle of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - the crossing of the sea and the drowning of Pharaoh. There it was said:

حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَتْ بِهٖ بَنُوْٓا اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَاَنَا۠ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ .

Until when he was about to drown, he said, "I believe that there is no god but the One in Whom the children of Isrā'īl believe, and I am among those who submit".

The answer to this appearing in the fifth verse (91) came from Allah Almighty Himself. It says:

آٰلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ

Is it now [that you come to believe] while you were rebellious before and you were among the mischief-makers?

This proves that the profession of faith exactly at the time of death is not legally trustworthy. It is further clarified by the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā keeps accepting the Taubah (repentance) of a servant until comes the time of the *ghargharah* of death. (Tirmidhī)

The *ghargharah* of death means the time the soul or spirit is drawn out or extracted from the body and it is a time when angels appear face to face. At that time, life in this world, the home of deeds, is all over and the laws of the Hereafter come into force. Therefore, nothing done at that time is acceptable, neither belief, nor disbelief. Whoever believes at such a time will not be called a believer. He will not be treated as a believer while shrouding and burying him. This stands proved from the fate of Pharaoh. There is a consensus that he died a

disbeliever. This is also what the text of the Qur'ān says. In case, someone is reported to have called the belief of the Pharaoh as valid, it will either be suitably interpreted, otherwise the statement would be considered false. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Similarly, if someone were to utter (God forbid) a word of disbelief (*kufr*) in a state when the soul is being drawn out of the body, he will not be called a *kāfir* (disbeliever). Instead, a Ṣalāh of Janāzah (Muslim funeral prayers) will be offered for him and he would be buried like Muslims, and the word of disbelief uttered by him would be interpreted (in his favor). This finds confirmation in what happened in the case of some Auliyā' of Allah, specially when that which they uttered bothered people as if what they were uttering was nothing short of *kufr* (disbelief). However, when they became conscious and explained, it gave relief to everyone and they realized that it was nothing but a declaration of true belief.

In short, when the soul is being drawn out and the certain knock of death is on, that time is not counted in the life one lives in this world. Nothing done at that time is valid in terms of the Sharī'ah. However, everything is, if done before that. But, those who see this transition from one world to the other have to be very cautious. It is possible to make a mistake in determining the correct situation. Is this the time of the drawing of the soul from the body (*naz'atu 'r-rūḥ*)? Or, is it the last rattle of death (*ghargharatu 'l-maut*)? Or, is it that which prevails earlier (usually referred to in English as being in the throes of death or the agony of death or, uncharitably enough, giving up the ghost)?

Verses 92 – 98

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ اٰيَةً ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ
النَّاسِ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا لَغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ بَوَّاْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مُبَوَّاَ
صِدْقٍ وَّرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ
الْعِلْمُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ
يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَاِنْ كُنْتَ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ فَسْــَٔلِ
الَّذِيْنَ يَقْرَءُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ لَقَدْ جَآءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ

فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا
بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَوْ جَآءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ اٰيَةٍ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا
الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيمَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ اٰمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَآ اِيمَانُهَآ
اِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ ط لَمَّآ اٰمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى حِينٍ ﴿٩٨﴾

So, today, We shall save your body, so that you may become a sign for those after you. And many of the people are heedless of Our signs. [92]

And surely We gave the children of Isrā'īl a proper place to live, and provided them with good things. So they did not disagree until knowledge came to them. Surely, Allah will decide between them on the Doomsday, about what they used to dispute. [93]

So, if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book (revealed) before you. Surely, truth has come to you from your Lord, so never be among those who are suspicious. [94]

And never be among those who have belied Our signs, lest you should be among the losers. [95]

Surely, those against whom the Word of your Lord stands settled will not believe, [96] **even though every sign comes to them, unless they witness the painful punishment.** [97]

So, how is it that there never was a town which could have believed and its belief would have been of benefit to it except the people of Yūnus (Jonah)! When they came to believe, We removed from them the punishment of humiliation in the worldly life and let them enjoy themselves for some time. [98]

Commentary

Addressing Pharaoh in the first verse (92), it was said that Allah will take his body out of the waters after he is drowned so that his

body becomes a sign of Divine power, and a lesson for people after him.

It happened when, after having crossed the sea, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام told Banī Isrā'īl about the drowning of the Pharaoh, they were so overawed and subdued by him that they refused to believe the news and said that the Pharaoh was not drowned. To guide them right and to teach others a lesson, Allah Ta'ala had the dead body of Pharaoh thrown ashore by a wave of the sea. Everyone saw it and believed that he had died and then, this corpse became a sort of moral deterrent for everyone. After that, it is not known as to what happened to this corpse ultimately. The place where the dead body of the Pharaoh was found is still known as the mount of Pharaoh.

Some time back, newspaper reports indicated that the dead body of Pharaoh was found intact and was seen by the public at large and that it was deposited safely in the Cairo Museum. But, it cannot be said with certainty that this is the same Pharaoh who confronted Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, or is some other Pharaoh because names of Pharaohs differ. Every ruler of Egypt in that period of history had the title of Pharaoh.

But, no wonder, the Divine power had thrown a drowned dead body ashore. Very similarly, it may have kept it even preserved against spoilage so that it could become a lesson for future generations. And it may still be there! (However it remains essential to learn a lesson from it as compared to becoming excited about its discovery as an archeological triumph).

At the end of the verse, it was said that many people pay no heed to the verses and signs of Allah. They do not ponder over them and fail to learn their essential lesson in living a better life. Otherwise, signs abound. They are everywhere, in every particle of this universe. A look at them would help one recognize Allah and His perfect power.

The second verse (93) brings the future of a people bulldozed in disgrace by the Pharaoh into sharp focus making it stand out against the evil end of the tyrant. It was said that Allah gave the Banī Isrā'īl a good place to live. They had the whole country of Egypt for themselves.

Then, they were given the holy lands of Jordan and Palestine which Allah Ta'ālā had assigned to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and his progeny as their inheritance. A good place to live has been termed as: مبوا صدق (translated as: 'a proper place to live') in the Qur'ān. The word: صدق (*ṣidq*) at this place means good and proper. The sense is that they were given a place to live that was suitable and proper for them in every way. Then it was said that Allah gave them their sustenance in the form of Ḥalāl and pure things so much so that they had the best of everything.

Towards the end of the verse, once again, their penchant for crookedness and evil doing has been mentioned. Among them too, there were many who, soon after having power, failed to appreciate the blessings of Allah and went about disobeying Him. They recited the Torah and they knew the signs and marks of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mentioned there. This awareness demanded that they should have been the first to believe in him as soon as he came. But, how strange that these very people believed in the coming of the last prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم before he actually came. They would tell people about the signs he would have and the time he would come. They would even use the *wasīlah* (medium) of the last prophet in their prayers. But, when the last prophet came with a whole array of evidences of his veracity, and the signs identified in the Torah, these people started disputing among themselves. Some of them believed while the rest refused to do so. In this verse, the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been expressed by saying: جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ (knowledge came to them). Here, علم (*'ilm*) could also denote certitude. In that case, it would mean that once the causes of observation and certitude converged together, these people started disputing.

Some commentators have said that علم (*'ilm*: knowledge) at this place denotes معلوم (*ma'lūm*: known), that is, when the blessed person who was already known through the prophesies of the Torah came before them face to face, they started disputing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā will give His verdict about what they used to dispute, on the day of Qiyamah. Truth will then become distinct from falsehood and the upholders of truth

will be sent to Paradise while the practitioners of falsehood, to Hell.

In the third verse (94), the address is obviously to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, it goes without saying that there is no probability of his doubting the revelation. Therefore, the purpose is to beam the message to the Muslim community through this address where he is not the intended recipient. Then, it is also possible that this address may be to human beings at large asking them if they had any doubts about the Divine revelation sent to them through Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. If they had, let them ask those who recited the Torah and Injīl before them. They would tell them that all past prophets and their Books have been announcing the glad tidings of the Last among Prophets. This will remove their scruples and suspicions.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, this verse tells us that anyone in doubt about some religious matter is duty-bound to have his doubts removed by asking genuine 'Ulamā' (religious scholars whose learning, honesty and adherence to Qur'ān, and Sunnah is well recognized, popularly referred to as *'Ulamā' al-Ḥaqq*). To continue nursing such doubts is not a good thing to do.

In the fourth (95), fifth (96) and sixth (97) verses, the same subject finds support and emphasis while carrying a warning to those who are heedless.

In the seventh verse (98), the heedless deniers of truth have been admonished for their failure to make the optimum use of the time of life allowed to them. There was still time for them to leave denial and contumacy. Otherwise, an ominous time was due to come when they will make Taubah but their Taubah will not be accepted. They will say that they believed but their belief will not be welcome. And that time will be the time when the punishment of the Hereafter will appear right before their eyes at the time of death. It was in this connection that an event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام and his people was mentioned – that has good counsels and great lessons in it.

It has been asked in this verse that the people who denied truth could have believed at a time when their believing would have been of benefit to them. It means that there was no use for it at the hour of

death, or the punishment, or after being neck deep in it, or at the time Doomsday sets in for the doors of repentance will then be closed and no repentance or belief from anyone will be acceptable. Now that they still had the time, they could put their contumacy aside and become believers very much like the people of Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام did. When they, much before the worse happened, saw the Divine punishment coming, they lost no time, repented and believed. For this reason, Allah Ta'ālā removed the painful punishment from them.

The gist of the *tafsir* given above is that the door of Taubah does not close even when the worldly punishment comes face to face. However, Taubah is not accepted at the time the punishment of the Hereafter comes face to face. As for the coming of the punishment of the Hereafter face to face, it would either be on the day of Qiyāmah or at the time of death, whether it is natural death or death as a victim of some worldly punishment as was the case with the Pharaoh.

Therefore, the acceptance of the Taubah of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is not contrary to the Divine law. In fact, it falls under it because they, no doubt, made their Taubah when they saw the punishment coming, but they certainly did so before the punishment overtook them, and did it before death too. This is contrary to what the Pharaoh and others did. They did their Taubah only after the punishment had overtaken them, and did that at the time of the last rattle of death, saying that they believed. Therefore, their believing was not valid and trustworthy and the Taubah they made was not accepted.

A precedent of the event relating to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is the event relating to Banī Isrā'īl which finds mention in the Holy Qur'ān itself. In this event, the mount of Ṭūr was left dangling over their heads so that they were scared enough to repent. They repented and their Taubah was accepted. This appears in Sūrah al-Baqarah where it was said:

رَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّوْرَ خُذُوْا مَآ اٰتَيْنٰكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

> And raised high above you the (Mount of) Ṭūr: "Hold fast to what We have given to you" – 2:63

The reason was that they had, much before the punishment mate-

rialized and death overtook them, repented simply by noticing the imminent danger of punishment. Similarly, when the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus علیہ السلام saw the punishment coming, they sincerely wept and wailed and repented details of which will appear a little later. So, the acceptance of this Taubah is not counter to the Divine law stated above. (Qurṭubī)

At this stage, some contemporaries have made a grave error. They attribute shortcomings to Sayyidnā Yūnus علیہ السلام in the discharge of his duties as a prophet. They declare that the cause of the removal of punishment from the people was the failing of the prophet and that this very failing was the cause of Divine displeasure which is mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' and Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāṭ. Their words are as given below:

قرآن کے اشارات اور صحیفه یونس کی تفصیلات پر غور کرنے سے اتنی بات صاف معلوم ہوجاتی ہے کہ حضرت یونس علیہ السلام سے فریضہ رسالت ادا کرنے میں کچھ کوتاہیاں ہوگئی تھیں اور غالبًا انہوں نے بے صبر ہو کر قبل از وقت اپنا مستقر چھوڑ دیا تھا ، اس لئے جب آثار عذاب دیکھ کر آشوریوں نے توبہ و استغفار کی تو اللہ تعالی نے انہیں معاف کردیا ، قرآن میں خدائی دستور کے جو اصول و کلیات بیان کئے گئے ہیں ان میں ایك مستقل دفعه یہ بھی ہے کہ اللہ تعالی کسی قوم کو اسوقت تك عذاب نہیں دیتا جب تك اس پر اپنی حجت پوری نہیں کردیتا ، پس جب نبی ادائے رسالت میں کوتاہی کر گیا اور اللہ کے مقرر کردہ وقت سے پہلے خود ہی اپنی جگہ سے ہٹ گیا تو اللہ تعالی کے انصاف نے اس قوم کو عذاب دینا گوارا نہ کیا . (تفہیم القرآن مولانا مودودی، ص ۳۲۱، ج ۲، طبع ١٩٦٤ء)

"By considering the hints of the Qur'ān and the details of the book of Jonah, at least this much becomes clear that some shortcomings had issued forth from Hadrat Yūnus علیہ السلام, peace be on him, in the performance of his duty as a prophet. And, most probably, becoming impatient, he had abandoned his permanent station before time. Therefore, having seen the

signs of punishment, the Assyrians repented and sought forgiveness, then Allah Ta'ālā forgave them. Out of the principles and universals of Divine Law described in the Qur'ān, there is this standing article as well – that Allah Ta'ālā does not punish a people until He establishes His argument against them conclusively. So, when the prophet went about falling short in doing his duty as a prophet and, on his own, vacated his station (of duty) before the time determined by Allah, then, the justice of Allah Ta'ālā did not bear by punishing those people." (Tafhīmul-Qur'ān[1] by Maulānā Mawdūdī, p. 321, volume 2, published 1964)[2]

The first thing to look at here is that the prophets, peace be upon them all, are protected from sins (*ma'ṣūm*). This is an uncontested belief on which there is a consensus of the Muslim Ummah. In its details, some partial differences do exist, for instance, is this protection (*'iṣmah*) from all kinds of minor sins (*ṣaghīrah*), or from the major ones (*kabīrah*) only, and whether or not this protection (*'iṣmah*) includes the period of time before being inducted as a prophet? But, no difference exists among any individuals or groups in the belief that the blessed prophets, all of them, can never fall short in carrying out their duty as

1. Ordinary changes have been made, without any prior public announcement of withdrawal from these remarks, in the later editions of Tafhīmul-Qur'ān, that is, the words: "فریضہ رسالت کی ادائیگی میں کوتاھی" : 'shortcomings in the performance of duty as a prophet,' are not there in the new text. But, the following observations are still there: "جب نبی نے .... پوری نہیں ھونی تھیں": When the prophet did not continue the mission of giving good counsel to those people up to the last moment of the respite given to them and, before the time determined by Allah, he himself, in a self-serving way, migrated out and away, then, the justice of Allah Ta'ālā did not bear by punishing his people, because the legal conditions of a conclusive argument against them had yet to be fulfilled." Thus, despite the change in the text of the Tafhīmul-Qur'ān, the comment of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān stands as is. – Idāratul-Ma'ārif, publishers, October/1991.

2. Apart from the religious aspects of the observations quoted above which have been dealt with in the Commentary of this Tafsīr, the language used to convey these has contributed significantly in making the observations acidly vulnerable. For example, the use of verbs towards the end: کرگیا (*kar gayā*), ھٹ گیا (*hat gayā*) and گوارا نہ کیا (*gawārā na kiyā*) are hot action words in the present context. When used for a prophet, they are terrible. When attributed to God, like the last one, they are presumptuous. The liberty taken through language is difficult to transplant in translation. By ignoring it, the translator turns traitor. So, the translator has made the extra effort to stay within functional limits and render the text as it is. Since, the Urdu original has been reproduced here, discerning readers who read it should have no problem in making their independent judgement about the rendering – Tr.

prophets. The reason is that there could be no greater sin for prophets than that they themselves fall short in taking care of the mission for which Allah Ta'ālā had chosen them. This is an open breach of trust in assigned duty, something beyond even ordinary nice people anywhere. If a prophet does not stand protected (*ma'ṣūm*) even from this shortcoming, then, there is no use for protection from other sins.

If there were something somewhere even in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth, seemingly contrary to the established principles of Qur'ān, and Sunnah, and the collective Muslim belief in prophets being protected from sins, it would have been necessary to interpret it in a way that would not have left it discordant and different from the absolutely proven principles of Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth.

But, things are strange here. What the learned author has presented with reference to 'Qur'ānic hints and details of the book of Jonah' may possibly be in the book of Jonah, and so be it, being something having no validity in the sight of the people of Islām. As for a 'Qur'ānic hint, there is none, not just one. In fact, what has happened here is that this presumption has been forced out of a patched pattern of several premises. First of all, it was presumed that the removal of the punishment from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام took place contrary to Divine law – which is totally contrary to the context of this very verse, and equally contrary to the explications of recognized authorities in the field of Tafsīr. Along with it, it was also assumed that Divine law was broken on this occasion because the prophet himself had failed to fulfill his duty as a prophet. Again, along with that, it was also assumed that some particular time had been fixed by Allah Ta'ālā when he was supposed to leave the place – and he, much before this supposedly fixed time, abandoned his duty of calling people to truth and ran for life!

If seen with the least deliberation and fairness, it will stand proved that no hint from the Qur'ān, or Ḥadīth points out to these assumed premises.

To consider what precedes in the verse of the Qur'ān itself, let us look at the words of the verse:

فَلَوْ لَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ اٰمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَآ اِيْمَانُهَآ اِلَّا قَوْمَ يُوْنُسَ

So, how is it that there never was a town which could have be-

> lieved and its belief would have been of benefit to it, except the people of Yūnus عليه السلام (Jonah)!

The sense, as already clear, is that of regret over the state of inertia prevailing among common residents of habitations around the world. It is in that spirit that it was said: How would they not become such as would have believed at a time when believing is acceptable and beneficial? In other words, they could have believed before being hit by punishment or death, in which case, their believing would have been accepted. But, the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام were an exception to this rule, for they, by seeing the signs of punishment, and much before being hit by the punishment, believed and their believing and repentance came to be accepted.

This evident sense of the verse is itself telling us that no Divine law has been broken here, in fact, exactly in accordance with Divine practice, their faith and repentance have been accepted.

Most commentators – Abū Ḥayyān, Al-Qurṭubī, Al-Zamakhsharī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh, 'Allāmah Ālūsī and others – have given this very sense of the verse according to which the acceptance of repentance from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام comes under the customary Divine law. The words of Al-Qurṭubī appear as given below:

> وقال ابنُ جُبَيْر غشيهم العذاب كما يغشى الثوب القبر، فلما صحت توبتهم رفع الله عنهم العذاب. وقال الطبرى: خص قوم يونس عليه السلام من بين سائر الامم بان تيب عليهم بعد معاينة العذاب، وذكر ذلك عن جماعة من المفسرين. وقال الزجاج، انهم لم يقع بهم العذاب، وانما رأوا العلامة التى تدل على العذاب ولورأوا عين العذاب لما نفعهم ايمانهم. قلت قول الزجاج حسن، فان المعاينة التى لا تنفع التوبة معها هى التلبس بالعذاب كقصة فرعون ولهذا جاء بقصه قوم يونس على اثر قصة فرعون، ويعضد هذا قوله عليه السلام : "ان الله يقبل توبة العبد مالم يغرغر والغرغرة، الحشرجة، وذلك هوحال التلبس بالموت، وقد روى معنى ما قلناه عن ابن مسعود رضى الله عنه (الى) وهذا يدل على ان توبتهم قبل رؤية العذاب (الى) وعلى هذا فلا اشكال ولا تعارض ولا خصوص .

> "Ibn Jubayr says that the punishment had covered them up like the sheet of cloth on the grave. Then, as their Taubah turned out to be sound (being before the punishment materialized), Allah Ta'ālā lifted the punishment from them. And At-

Ṭabarī says that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام have been given a special place among all other peoples in that their Taubah was accepted after they had seen the punishment. And that has been mentioned by a large number of commentators. However, Az-Zajjāj says that the punishment had not yet fallen on those people. They had only seen the signs that proved the coming of the punishment. And if they had seen the very punishment falling upon them, their believing would have then been no good for them (and their Taubah too would have not been accepted). Al-Qurṭubī says that the statement of Az-Zajjāj is better because the seeing of a punishment after which Taubah is not accepted means that in which one is seized – as it happened in the case of Pharaoh. Therefore, in this very Sūrah, the event of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام has been taken up immediately after the event relating to the Pharaoh. (So that the difference becomes clear in that the belief of the Pharaoh came after having been seized by the punishment, contrary to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, who came to believe before the punishment actually seized them). This is confirmed by a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'Allah Ta'ālā accepts the Taubah of the servant until he is rattled by death.' And '*al-ghargharah*' (as in the Ḥadīth) is the rattling sound that comes from the throat and that is what happens on being seized by death. And the same thing is evident from the *riwāyah* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه in which it has been said that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had repented before the actual falling of the punishment. And Al-Qurṭubī says, as based on this explanation, there remains no difficulty, or contradiction, or particularization (of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام).

As for At-Ṭabarī and other commentators who have deemed this event to be special to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, none of them have said that the reason of this special treatment was the 'shortcomings' of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. Instead, the honest repentance of those people and their sincere belief in Divine knowledge are the kind of reasons that they have given to that end.

And now, when we know that the removal of the punishment from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was just not against the Divine law, in fact, was exactly in accordance with it, then, the very

foundation of what has been postulated here stands demolished.

Similarly, there is no Qur'ānic hint to prove that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, once he had given the warning of punishment, broke away from his people without prior Divine permission. Instead, the context of verses and reports from Tafsīr tell us that things happened here as they had happened with all past communities, that is, when the decision was made to send Divine punishment on a people, Allah Ta'ālā would command his Messenger and his companions to leave that area. This has been clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān in connection with the story of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. Very similarly, here too, when this command of Allah was delivered to those people through Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام – that the punishment will come after three days – then, the departure of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام from that area has, obviously enough, taken place under Divine orders.

Of course, there was a slip from Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in terms of the elegant prophetic station he was blessed with. Words of displeasure about it appear in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21:87,88) and Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt (37:139-148) and, as a result of which, came the event of his staying in the belly of a fish. But, this slip has nothing to do with the assumed assertion that he fell short in fulfilling his duty as a prophet. In fact, what actually happened is what has been stated earlier with reference to authentic Tafsīrs. In brief, after Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had delivered the warning to his people that the punishment will come after three days as willed by Allah, he left his place and went out. Later, it was proved that the punishment did not materialize. Now, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was worried as to how he would go back to his people. If he did, they would charge him to be a liar. And the law of those people required that a proven liar must be killed. Now, this added the danger of the likely loss of life in returning to his people. Under such circumstances, he had no way out but to migrate from that very country. But, the customary practice of the blessed prophets is that they do not migrate simply on the authority of their personal opinion – unless the signal to migrate comes from Allah Ta'ālā. So, the slip of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was no more than that he boarded a boat with the intention of migration, before came the permission of Allah. This was, though no sin in itself, but different from the customary practice of prophets it was. If we were to ponder over the

words of the verse of the Qur'ān, the slip of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام will not turn out to be a shortcoming in the fulfillment of his duty as a prophet. In fact, it would prove not to be anything else but migration before permission with the aim of staying safe against the oppression of his people. The verse of Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt is virtually explicit regarding this subject. It was said: إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (when he ran away towards the laden boat – 37:140). Here, the act of boarding a boat with the intention of migration has been expressed through the word: أبق (*abaqā*) denoting displeasure. It means the running away or fleeing of a slave without the permission of his master. And in the verse of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', it has been said: وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ (and the man of the fish, when he left in anger assuming that We shall not keep him tight – 21:87). Here the tenor of speech is that of displeasure over the act of migration that was resorted to because of natural apprehension and the desire to stay protected from a hostile people. It is worth keeping in mind that all this happened after the perfect fulfillment of the duties of prophethood, only when a return to his people posed a certain danger to his life. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has taken up this subject in the following words:

اى غضبان على قومه لشدة شكيمتهم وتمادى اصرارهم مع طول دعوته اياهم، وكان ذهابه هذا سهم هجرة عنهم، لكنه لم يؤمر به

(Sayyidnā Yunus عليه السلام) left his people in anger against their bitter hostility and adamant infidelity despite that he had spent a long time as a prophet inviting them to faith. This journey of his was a kind of migration but he had not yet received the permission for it.

Here, it has been made clear that some shortcoming in carrying out the prophetic mission was not the cause of Divine displeasure, instead, it was migration before permission that did become its cause – which, by itself, was no sin. But, because of being contrary to the customary practice of blessed prophets, it was received with displeasure. When some 'Ulamā sounded the learned contemporary about this error, he chose to report the sayings of many commentators relating to the Tafsīr of Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt, in support of his stand.

Among these – with the exception of some Israelite reports of Wahb ibn Munabbih and others – not a single report proves his stand,

that shortcomings were committed (God forbid) by Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in the fulfillment of his duty as a prophet, as correct.

And it is not hidden from the people of knowledge that commentators generally include Israelite reports in their Tafsīrs about which all of them agree that these are not authentic and trustworthy. No Islāmic legal ruling can be based on them. It is only through the crutches of these Israelite reports, whether they appear in the books of Muslim commentators or in the book of Jonah, that this grave accusation can be leveled against Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام that 'he had committed shortcomings in the fulfillment of his duties as a prophet.' No commentator of Islām has ever approved of it.

وَاللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهٗ وَتَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ، وَبِه استغيث ان يعصمنا من الخطايا والزلات

And Allah, He is Pure and High and the Most Knowledgeable and before Him is our plaint that He protects us from all errors and lapses.

Details of the Event relating to Sayyidnā Yunus عليه السلام

Part of the details of the event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام has been mentioned in the Qur'ān while some of it has its proof in reports of Ḥadīth and history. According to these sources, the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lived in the well-known place, Nineveh near Mousel, Iraq. Their number has been given as more than one hundred thousand in the Holy Qur'ān. It was for their guidance that Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. They refused to believe. Allah Ta'ālā asked Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام to warn these people that Divine punishment was going to overtake them within three days. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام made the announcement before his people. When they went in consultation with each other, they agreed that they had never found Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lying, therefore, this thing from him was not to be ignored. Finally, they devised a plan to see whether or not Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام stays among them at his place during the night. If he did, they were to understand that nothing would happen. And if he went somewhere else from there, then, they should be certain that the punishment would descend upon them the next morning. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام moved out of his dwelling place during the night as Divinely commanded. When morning came, the Divine punishment, in the form of a cloud-like black smoke started hovering over their heads tending to be descending down closer to them. They then

became certain that they all were going to be destroyed. Seeing this, they looked for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام so that they could confess to their past denial, repent and believe with him as the witness. But, when they did not find him, they took it upon themselves to come up with repentance and prayers for forgiveness in the best spirit of sincerity at their command. To do that, they left homes, came out on open grounds, women, children and animals all huddled there. Wearing rags, weeping and wailing, repenting and begging refuge from Divine punishment, they made the whole area resound with a massive collective plaint. Allah Ta'ālā accepted their repentance and removed the punishment from them – as mentioned in this verse. Reports indicate that this was 'Āshūrā, that is, the day of the tenth of Muḥarram.

On the other side, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was waiting outside the township expecting that the Divine punishment will be about to hit the people there. He knew nothing about how they had repented and sought forgiveness. When the punishment stood removed, he started worrying about himself for his people would now declare him to be a liar – because he had announced that the punishment would strike within three days. According to the law of those people, if a person whose lying was known did not produce a witness in his support, he would be killed. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was concerned apprehending that he would be declared a liar and killed.

The noble prophets are protected from every act of sin and disobedience, but are not set apart from others in terms of human nature and temperament. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام naturally grieved that he had made the announcement as Divinely commanded and now it was because of the announcement he made he would be declared a liar. How could he go back to his place under these circumstances and take the risk of being killed in accordance with the law of his people? Deep in this anxiety, he started off with the intention of getting out of that town until he reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. There he saw a boat being boarded by people. They recognized Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام and let him board *gratis*. The boat sailed. But, when it reached off shore, it stopped suddenly. It refused to move any further, neither forward, nor backward. The boat people made an announcement. They said that Allah had made their boat special. When an oppressive sinner or a slave in flight boards it, the

boat stops on its own. So, they said, let that person show himself up so that others do not suffer because of one person.

Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام spoke out that he was the sinner and the fleeing slave. As the act of leaving his town and boarding the boat was prompted by a natural apprehension and not by Divine permission, the dignified bearing of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام as a prophet had no hesitation in declaring this act, of coming towards the boat without that permission, a sin. The rule was that no movement of a prophet should have been without Divine permission. So he said, 'Throw me into the sea and be spared of the punishment.' The people of the boat would not do that. They drew lots so that the person thus named could be thrown into the sea. By chance, the lot drawn had the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام on it. They were intrigued. They drew lots again and again. But, as Divine decree would have it, the name that kept appearing repeatedly was that of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. The Holy Qur'ān mentions this drawing of lots and the incidence of the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام being drawn therein (to be the one to be thrown overboard): فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (and he drew lots and was among the losers – 37:141).

This dealing of Allah Ta'ālā with Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was in view of his special status as a prophet. He had done no contravention of any Divine command that could be called sin or disobedience – for that matter, there exists no possibility of these issuing forth from any prophet because they are *ma'sūm* (Divinely protected). But, it was not appropriate to the high station of a prophet that he would transfer to another place without Divine permission simply on the basis of natural apprehension. It was this contra-dignity conduct which brought displeasure and resultant action.

On the one hand, names were being drawn in lots. The named was waiting to be thrown overboard. On the other hand, a large fish under Divine orders was lurking by the boat with her mouth agape, waiting for the incumbent to be thrown into the sea and right into her belly. Allah Ta'ālā had already commanded the fish that the body of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام that was to be deposited in her belly was no food for her, instead, was his home for a while. When Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was lowered into the sea, the fish received him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lived in the belly

of the fish for forty days. It would take him down to the sea bed and to nautical journeys far and wide. The period of his stay in the belly of the fish has also been reported as, five, and one day and few hours. (Maẓharī) Only Allah Ta'ālā knows the truth about it. Living in that state, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام made the following *du'ā*:

لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ اِنِّىْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

> There is no god but You. Pure are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers – 21: 87.

Allah Ta'ālā accepted this prayer and Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was put on the shore alive and unharmed.

But, the heat in the belly of the fish had left no hair on his body. Allah Ta'ālā caused a gourd vine to grow near him. Even the shade provided by the leaves on it became a blessing for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. And signaled by Allah Ta'ālā, a wild goat would come every morning and evening, stand near him and he would have milk to drink.

Thus, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was alerted to that slip, and later on, his people too came to know the whole story.

In this story, as for parts that have been mentioned in the Qur'ān, or stand proved from authentic narratives of Ḥadīth, they are certain. The rest of them come from historical reports – and no ruling of Islāmic law can be based on them.

Verses 99 – 100

وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَاٰمَنَ مَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ
تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتّٰى يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ
تُؤْمِنَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا
يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾

Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed altogether. Would you, then, compel people, so that they become believers? [99]

And it is not for any one that he believes except with the will of Allah. And He makes filth settle on those who do not understand. [100]

Verses 101 – 103

قُلِ انْظُرُوْا مَاذَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْاٰيٰتُ وَ
النُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُوْنَ اِلَّا مِثْلَ اَيَّامِ
الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ
الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ ثُمَّ نُنَجِّيْ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كَذٰلِكَ ؕ حَقًّا
عَلَيْنَا نُنْجِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

Say, "Look at what is there in the heavens and the earth?" But, signs and warners do not suffice a people who do not believe. [101]

So, are they waiting for nothing short of something like the days of those who have passed before them? Say, "So wait. I am with you, among those waiting." [102]

Then We (used to) save Our messengers and those who believed. Similarly, it being on Us, We shall save the believers. [103]

Verses 104 – 107

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ دِيْنِيْ فَلَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْنَ
تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ اَعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۚ
وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَاَنْ اَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ
حَنِيْفًا ۚ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ ۚ فَاِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَاِنَّكَ اِذًا مِّنَ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗٓ
اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَآدَّ لِفَضْلِهٖ ؕ يُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ
مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٧﴾

Say, "O people, if you are in doubt about my Faith, then, I do not worship those you worship beside Allah. Rather, I worship Allah who brings death to you. And I have been ordained to be among the believers, [104] **and**

that I should make myself firm on Faith, being upright, and never be among the Mushriks."* [105]

And do not invoke, other than Allah, what neither benefits you nor harms you, for, if you do so, then you will surely be one of the unjust. [106]

And if Allah brings some harm to you, then, there is none to remove it except He. And if He intends to bring some good to you, then, there is none to turn His grace back. He brings it to whomever He wills from among His servants. And He is the Most-Forgiving, the Very Merciful. [107]

Verses 108 – 109

قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ ٱلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنِ ٱهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِى لِنَفْسِهِۦ ۖ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۖ وَمَآ أَنَا۠ عَلَيْكُم بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَٱتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰٓ إِلَيْكَ وَٱصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ ٱلْحَٰكِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Say, "O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord. So, whoever accepts guidance accepts it to his own benefit, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And I am not responsible for you." [108]

And follow what is being revealed to you, and be patient until Allah gives His judgment, and He is the best of judges. [109]

Alḥamdulillāh
The commentary on
Sūrah Yūnus
Ends here.

*Mushriks: those who associate partners to the divinity of Allah.

Sūrah Hūd

Sūrah Hūd is Makkī and it has 123 Verses and 10 Sections

Verses 1 – 5

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful

الٓرٰ قف كِتٰبٌ اُحۡكِمَتۡ اٰيٰتُهٗ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتۡ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡ حَكِيۡمٍ خَبِيۡرٍ ﴿١﴾
اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّنِىۡ لَـكُمۡ مِّنۡهُ نَذِيۡرٌ وَّبَشِيۡرٌ ﴿٢﴾ وَّاَنِ
اسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡا رَبَّكُمۡ ثُمَّ تُوۡبُوۡۤا اِلَيۡهِ يُمَتِّعۡكُمۡ مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلٰٓى
اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّيُؤۡتِ كُلَّ ذِىۡ فَضۡلٍ فَضۡلَهٗ ؕ وَاِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا فَاِنِّىۡۤ
اَخَافُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ كَبِيۡرٍ ﴿٣﴾ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ ۚ وَهُوَ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿٤﴾ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهُمۡ يَثۡنُوۡنَ صُدُوۡرَهُمۡ
لِيَسۡتَخۡفُوۡا مِنۡهُ ؕ اَلَا حِيۡنَ يَسۡتَغۡشُوۡنَ ثِيَابَهُمۡ ۙ يَعۡلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوۡنَ
وَمَا يُعۡلِنُوۡنَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿٥﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. **(This is) a book the verses of which have been made firm, then elaborated by a Being All Wise, All Aware, [1] (with an order) that you worship none but Allah – surely, I am for you a warner from Him, and a bearer of glad tidings [2] – and that you seek forgiveness from your Lord, then, turn to Him in repentance. He shall, then, provide you with good things to enjoy for a given time, and bestow His added grace on everyone of excellence. And if you turn away, then, I fear for you the punishment of a great day. [3] To Allah is your return and He is powerful over everything. [4] Beware, they bend their chests to hide from Him. Beware, when they make their clothes a cover, He knows what they hide and what they expose. Surely, He is All Aware of what lies in the hearts. [5]**

Commentary

Sūrah Hūd is among the Sūrahs that describe the coming of several kinds of mass punishments triggered by Divine displeasure as well as the horrendous happenings of the fateful day of Judgement and its outcome in the form of individual reward and punishment, all in a manner that is unique.

For this reason, when a few strands of hair in the blessed beard of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had turned visibly grey, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه expressed his concern by saying: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, you have become old.' He said: 'Yes, Sūrah Hūd has made me old.' There are reports which also add Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah, al-Mursalāt, 'Amma Yatasā'alūn (an-Naba') and at-Takwīr with Sūrah Hūd. (Reported by al-Ḥākim and Tirmidhī)

The sense articulated through the Ḥadīth given above was to highlight that such was the awe and terror inspired by the mention of these happenings that it caused the emergence of the signs of old age.

The first verse of the Sūrah opens with the letters: الر (*alif, lām, rā*). These are isolated letters the meaning of which is a secret between Allah Ta'ālā and His Rasūl. Others have not been informed about it. Rather, they have been prohibited from even worrying about it.

After that, about the Holy Qur'ān it was said that it was a book the verses of which are made '*muḥkam*' (firm). The word: محكم (*muḥkam*) is from: احكام (*iḥkām*) which means such a correct balancing of meaningful speech as would not leave the probability of any error or disorder in word or meaning. Based on this definition, the making of these verses '*muḥkam*,' firm or established would mean that Allah Ta'ālā has made these verses such as do not admit of any likelihood and probability of any error in words, or disorder in meanings, or defect, or falsity. (Qurṭubī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that '*muḥkam*' (firm) at this place stands in contrast to '*mansūkh*' (abrogated). And the sense is that Allah Ta'ālā has made the verses of the Qur'ān as a whole firm, non-abrogated – that is, the way earlier Books, Torah, Injil etc. were abrogated after the revelation of the Qur'ān. But, after the revelation of this Book, since the very chain of the coming of prophets and revelations came to an end, therefore, this

Book will not be abrogated until the last day of *Qiyāmah*. (Qurṭubī) As for the abrogation of some verses of the Qur'ān through the Qur'ān itself, it is not contrary to this.

In the same verse, given there was another standing feature of the Qur'ān: ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ (*thumma fuṣṣilat*) that is, 'then these verses were elaborated'. The real meaning of *tafsīl* or elaboration is to separate two things and make them distinct from each other. For this reason, different sections in ordinary (Arabic) books bear the heading of 'Faṣl'. At this place, the elaboration of verses could also mean that the verses concerning beliefs, acts of worship, dealings, social living, morals etc. have been separated from each other and described clearly.

And it could also mean that, as far as Allah Ta'ālā's will is concerned, the entire Qur'ān had already been embedded in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*). But, later it was revealed bit by bit in many installments as necessitated under different conditions prevailing among peoples and countries, so that its preservation could become easy and acting in accordance with it also turns out to be functionally convenient.

After that, it was said: مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ خَبِيْرٍ that is, all these verses have come from a Sacred Being who is absolutely and simultaneously Wise and Aware. In other words, there are so many considerations of wisdom ingrained in everything that issues forth from Him. It is impossible for human beings to encompass them all. Then He is fully aware of every particle, present now or to be present in the future, of this multifaceted universe. He knows all states of their existence as it is and as it will be and releases His commands keeping all this in sight. This is not like what human beings do. No matter how intelligent, smart and experienced they may be, their reason and vision are still cordoned by a limited frame of reference. Their experience is the product of what is around them. And this, mostly, proves to be unsuccessful, even wrong, especially when it concerns what would happen in the future under different times and conditions. (Interestingly enough, the observations of the commentator apply to what we now know as the intellectual phenomena of Futurology with its pundits, fellow travelers and dabblers all over the world, including Pakistan! – tr.).

From the second verse begins the delineation of one of the most important and foremost themes, that of Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah

Ta'ālā. It is said: اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ (that you worship none but Allah). It means that among things stated in these verses the most important and foremost is that no one else should be worshipped except the One Allah.

After that, it was said: اِنَّنِيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ وَّبَشِيْرٌ (Surely, I am for you a warner from Him, and a bearer of glad tidings). It means that the noble messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to tell the whole world through these verses that he was for them a carrier of warning (against disobedience) and a bearer of glad tidings (of blessings in this life and in the life to come) from Allah.

The word: نذير (*nadhīr*) is usually taken to mean a person who puts the fear of something into someone's heart. But, this word is not used to denote a fear-generating enemy or beast or others that harm. Instead of that, *nadhīr* is applied to a person who, out of his love and affection to someone, warns him against and saves him from some harmful things. These could be things that harm in this world and might as well could be those that bring harm in the Hereafter.

Out of the instructions given in these verses of the Qur'ān, the second one appears in the third verse in the words: وَّاَنِ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ (and that you seek forgiveness from your Lord). It means that, in these verses of firm and established meaning, Allah Ta'ālā has also instructed His servants to ask for forgiveness and pardon from their Lord, and make their Taubah before Him. Forgiveness (*maghfirah*) relates to past sins and Taubah (repentance) relates to the resolve of not going near these anymore. And, in reality, a correct and true Taubah is no more than being ashamed of past sins, praying to Allah that they be forgiven and resolving firmly that they would not be repeated in future. Therefore, some righteous elders have said that seeking forgiveness from Allah only verbally – without having made a firm resolution, and the necessary arrangements to implement it, in order to remain safe from future sins – is the Taubah (repentance) of liars (*al-kadhdhābīn*). (Qurṭubī) Or, as it was said poetically:

معصیت راخندہ می آید بر استغفار ما

'Sin laughs at my style of seeking forgiveness'

or that such repentance is itself worth being repented.

After that, glad tidings of the finest fruits of success in *Dunyā* and

'Ākhirah have been given to those who repent and seek forgiveness by saying: يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلَىٰٓ اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (He will, then, provide you with good things to enjoy for a given time). It means that those who genuinely seek forgiveness for their past sins and firmly resolve to abstain from these in future and do what it takes to implement their resolution, then, not only that their error will be forgiven, they would also be blessed with a good life. And it is obvious that 'life' here carries a general sense that includes life in the mortal world as well as the life in the Hereafter. It is about such people that the Qur'ān has said elsewhere: لَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً (We shall certainly give them good and pure life – 16:97). According to the investigations of the majority of commentators, both the lives of *Dunyā* and *'Ākhirah* are included in the sense of this verse as well. This has been further clarified in Sūrah Nūḥ. The address is to the seekers of forgiveness. It was said: يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا وَّيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ اَنْهٰرًا It means: (if you were to seek forgiveness from Allah genuinely), Allah Ta'ālā shall send the sky showering over you (the rains of His mercy) and bless you with wealth and children and make for you gardens and bring for you rivers – 71:11). It is obvious that the mercy of rains and the blessings of wealth and children relate to the life of the present world.

That is why most of the commentators have taken the expression مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا (good things to enjoy) to mean the worldly enjoyments. According to them the sense is that, 'Allah Ta'ālā shall bless you with extended sustenance and easy modalities of comfort and protect you from calamities and punishments – as a result of the forgiveness you seek and the repentance you show. And since this worldly life must end some day, the enjoyment of its comforts cannot become eternal under the law of nature. Therefore, by adding the caveat: اِلَىٰٓ اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (for a given time), it has been stressed that the 'good things to enjoy' in the present world will be available up to a particular time, that is, the time of death. On the final count, death will eliminate all these things.

But, soon after this 'death,' the life of the other world will begin, and there too, eternal comforts will be available to those who repent and seek forgiveness.

And Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رحمه الله تعالى said, 'The meaning of 'good things to enjoy' is that one's attention bypasses the created and remains fixed on the Creator.' Some other men of Allah have said, 'The

reality of 'good things to enjoy' is that one remains content with what is available and worries not for what is not.' In other words, one should be satisfied with as much as is within easy reach in this world and should not eat his heart out for what he does not have.

Of the glad tidings given to those who repent and seek forgiveness, the second appears in the following words: وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ (and bestow His added grace on everyone of excellence). Here, the first فضل (*faḍl*: excellence) refers to one's good deed, while the second '*faḍl*' denotes Divine grace or bounty, that is, the Paradise. Put simply, the sense is that Allah Ta'ālā shall bless every doer of good deed with His grace, that is, Paradise.

A promise was made of Good Life, both in *Dunyā* and *Ākhirah*, in the first sentence, and of everlasting blessings of Paradise, in the second. After that, it was said: فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيْرٍ (And if you turn away, then, I fear for you the punishment of a great day). That is: 'If you turn away from the good counsel given to you, fail to seek forgiveness for your past sins, and fail to remain safe against sins in the future, then, there is a strong likelihood that you will be seized by the punishment of a great day'. It refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* for it would be a day of one thousand years and, also in terms of what ominous things would transpire in it, it will be the gravest.

In the fifth verse, the theme has been emphasized further. Let man do what he elects to. Let him live the way he fancies. But, ultimately, once dead, man has to return to Him and He is powerful over everything. It is not at all difficult for Him to have each particle man is made of reassembled after he is dead and becomes dust and see to it that there rises the man he was, all over again.

The sixth verse carries a refutation of what the hypocrites and the disbelievers do. They try to camouflage their hostility, and their antagonistic activism against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, as deftly as they could. Their hearts blaze with malice and enmity but they maintain a cool front, find all sorts of covers to hide their true identity and intention and surmise that no one would find out who they were really and what they were doing actually. But, the truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā knows it all, that which they let come out in the open and that which they conceal behind all sorts of clothes, covers and curtains: اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ because, 'He is All Aware of [even] what lies in the

hearts.'

Verses 6 – 8

وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ
مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ؕ كُلٌّ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ
خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ وَّكَانَ عَرْشُهٗ عَلَى الْمَآءِ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ؕ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتَ اِنَّكُمْ مَّبْعُوْثُوْنَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٧﴾
وَلَئِنْ اَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ اِلٰٓى اُمَّةٍ مَّعْدُوْدَةٍ لَّيَقُوْلُنَّ
مَا يَحْبِسُهٗ ؕ اَلَا يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوْفًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ
مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾

And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah. And He knows its permanent and its temporary place. Everything is in a clear book. [6]

And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days and His throne was on water so that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed. And if you say, "you shall be raised after death," the disbelievers will surely say, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

And if We defer the punishment for them for a certain time, they shall say, "What is holding it back?" Beware, the day it visits them, it shall not be turned back from them and they shall be besieged by what they used to ridicule. [8]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā from whom nothing is hidden, nothing from the tiniest particle of the universe down to the secrets of the hearts. It is in consonance with it that the first verse (6) mentions a great favor bestowed on human beings – that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself taken the responsibility of providing their sustenance. Then, this is not restricted to human beings alone. It extends to every living form that walks over

the earth. Its sustenance reaches it where it lives or goes to. That being the state of affairs, the intentions and efforts of disbelievers and hypocrites to hide things from Allah Ta'ālā are nothing but ignorance and senselessness. Then, taken in a general sense, it would include all beasts, birds, insects and all animals of the land and the sea. To intensify this generality, the word: من (*min*) has been added and the text reads: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ (and there is no creature). *Dābbah* is any creature that moves on earth. Birds are also included there because their nests are also located somewhere on the land. That creatures living in water have also a connection with the surface of the earth is no secret. Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing sustenance for all these life forms and has put it in words which give the impression of a duty imposed on someone. It was said: عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (its sustenance is on Allah). It is obvious that there is no power that could put a liability on Allah Ta'ālā. What really happened is that Allah Ta'ālā himself has made this promise out of his grace and mercy. But, this promise comes from One who is True and Merciful. There is no probability of things happening otherwise, counter to the promise. This is a matter of certitude. It is to express this element of certitude that the word: على (*'alā*: on) has been introduced at this place – a word used to describe duties, although, Allah Ta'ālā takes no orders from anyone, nor is He responsible for something as obligated or necessary.

Lexically, رزق *rizq* (sustenance, provision or livelihood) means something from which a creature procures its food and through which the body grows and the soul survives.

According to the lexical meaning of the word '*rizq*', it is not necessary that whoever has it should also be its owner – because, *rizq* is given to all animals, but they are not its owners. They are not cut out for ownership. Similarly, infants are not the owners of their *rizq*, but it is given to them.

In terms of this general sense of *rizq*, 'Ulamā' have said that *rizq* could be *ḥalāl* (lawful) and it could also be *ḥarām* (unlawful), because for a person who eats up what belongs to the other person, that property, no doubt, becomes his food, but so it becomes only unlawfully. Had this person not used unfair means blinded by his greed, he would have received the *ḥalāl* (lawful) *rizq* reserved and appointed for him.

Removal of a doubt against the Divine Responsibility of *Rizq*

A question arises at this stage. When Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing food for every creature, why is it that there are many animals and human beings who die of hunger and thirst for the reason that they do not get food or water? The *'Ulamā'* have given several answers.

One possible answer is that the responsibility of *rizq* is there until comes the appointed time, that is, until comes the end of the years of life. When these years are over, one has to die, pass away from this world, the common causes of which are diseases, or accidents like burning, drowning, injury and wounds. Similarly, there could also be the reason that the *rizq* for the incumbent was stopped and which caused death.

Imām al-Qurṭubī, under his comments on this verse, has mentioned an event related to Abū Mūsā, Abū Mālik and some others from their tribe of Banū al-Ash'ar. When these people reached the blessed city of Madīnah after their Hijrah, the wherewithal of their journey was all used up. They sent one of their men to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in the hope that he would make some arrangement for their meals. When this person reached his door, he heard the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم reciting the verse: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِی الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَی اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah - 6). Hearing this verse, the person, thought that Allah has Himself taken the responsibility of providing *rizq* for all life forms, human or non-human, then, we Ash'arites too would not be any worse than the animals in the sight of Allah. He shall, most certainly, give us our *rizq*. With this thought in his mind, he turned from the door and left. He simply said nothing to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم about why he was there. After having returned to his tribe, he said, 'Rejoice, my friends. The help of Allah is coming for you.' His Ash'arī companions took his words in a different sense. They thought that their emissary sent to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was talking about the success of his visit and that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had promised to make arrangements for what they needed. Naturally, they found the news good and felt satisfied. Hardly had they sat down when they saw two men bringing a trencher, a large wooden tray, full of meat and bread. The carriers gave all this food to the Ash'arites who ate it to their fill. When food was still

left, they thought it would be nice to send the rest of the food to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم so that he could use it as he deemed fit. They had two of their men carry this food to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Later they all presented themselves before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and told him, *'Yā Rasūlallāh*, the food you sent was very nice and very delicious.' He said, 'As for me, I never sent any food.'

Then, they told him the whole story that they had sent one of their men to him, the reply that he gave led them to believe that the food was sent by him. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'not by me, this was sent by the Most Sacred Being who has taken the responsibility of providing *rizq* to every living creature.'

According to some Ḥadīth reports, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the Mount of Ṭūr in search of fire, what he found there was not fire but Divine light. He was made a prophet and asked to go to Egypt so that the Pharaoh and his people could be brought on the right path. At that hour, it occurred to him that he had left his wife in a wilderness all alone – who would take care of her? To remove this scruple from his heart, Allah Ta'ālā asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to strike his rod at the rock in front of him. When he did what he was asked to do, the rock split and out came yet another rock. He was asked to strike his rod at that too. He did that, the rock split and out came the third rock from it. He was asked to strike his rod at that too. It split and coming out from it he saw a creature holding a green leaf in his mouth.

No doubt, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام believed in the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā even before, but what one sees with one's eyes has an effect of its own. So, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw this, he took off for Egypt right from that spot. He did not even stop to tell his wife that he had been commanded to leave for Egypt and that he was going there.

Rizq for All: The Divine System is Unique

After having made the promise in this verse that Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing the *rizq* of every living creature, things have not been left at that. Instead, to put human beings further at ease, it was said: وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا (and He knows its permanent and its temporary place – 6). Different explanations of the words: مستقر

(*mustaqarr*) and مستودع (*mustawda'*) have been reported but, lexically, what Tafsīr al-Kashshāf carries is the closest. It says that *mustaqarr* is the place someone makes a permanent residence, or home; and *mustawda'* is a place where one stays temporarily to take care of something (as it appears in the translation of the text).

The sense being driven home is that the responsibility of Allah Ta'ālā should not be taken on the analogy of responsibilities as assumed by peoples and governments of the world of our experience. Here in this world, let us assume that there is a person or institution that would take the responsibility of delivering your '*rizq*' to you. In that case, if you were going somewhere, you would inform that individual or institution that you were leaving your permanent place to go somewhere else. Then, you will have to give a firm itinerary that you will be living in such and such city or village, from such and such date to such and such date, and that you wanted your provider to deliver your *rizq* there! But, when things are 'on Allah' and under His responsibility, you do not have to take even this much of trouble because He knows when you move and He knows when you do not and He knows what you are doing in this or that state. He knows where you live permanently and He knows where you live temporarily. He needs no application, or advice or address to take care of your *rizq*. It is just delivered wherever you are.

In view of the all-encompassing knowledge and perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, only His will would have been sufficient to make everything come out right – without the need to maintain a log book or master file of work done. But, the only analogy weak man has is the analogy of the system he is used to, therefore, he could have apprehensions of possible errors and omissions. So, for his peace of mind, it was said: كُلٌّ فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (Everything is in a clear book). This 'clear book' means the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) which has a universal coverage with full details of the sustenance, age, deed and things like that and which are entrusted with concerned angels as and when needed.

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ and reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā had written the destinies of all His creation fifty thousand years even before the creation of the heavens and the earth.'

A lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ

عنہ, appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, reports the saying of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم which is summarized as follows: 'Man goes through different stages before his birth. When the parts of his body are formed completely, Allah Ta'ālā commands an angel who writes down four things about him. One: Deeds he will do. Two: Years of life. Even recorded there is the month, day, minute and breath count. Three: Death: Where would he die and where would he be buried? Four: *Rizq*: How much is his sustenance and how and where does it have to reach him?' (And that it stands written in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) even before the creation of the heavens and the earth is not contrary to this).

Another manifestation of the all-encompassing knowledge and perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā has been mentioned in the second verse (7) – 'And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days and (before creating these) His throne was on water.'

This tells us that water was created before the creation of the heavens and the earth. As for the elaboration of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, it has appeared in Sūrah Hā Mīm as-Sajdah (also called Sūrah Fuṣṣilat). There it has been said that the earth was created in two days, mountains, river streams, trees and means for the sustenance and survival of living creatures in two days, then, the seven heavens in two days – 41:9-12).

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, heavens mean everything high and above and the earth means down and below. Day is the measure of time which, after the creation of the heavens and the earth, is from sunrise to sunset – although, at the time of the creation of the heavens and the earth, neither did the sun exist nor its rising and setting.

It was also within the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā to create all these things in the flash of a moment but, in His infinite wisdom, He has made the system of this world gradual which is suitable for human temperament.

The purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth has been identified at the end of the verse by saying: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (So that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed).

This tells us that the creation of the heavens and the earth was not the main purpose. The fact is that these were created for human be-

ings who act right, do better and, along with it, also make the best use of what has been placed therein to run their lives. Finally, it is expected of them that they would ponder over these and would not miss to recognize their Master and Lord (the *Mālik*, the *Rabb*).

The outcome is that human beings are the real purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth. However, human beings are not all alike. Among them there are those who believe and have faith. Then, even among the later, there is someone, a man or a woman, who is the best in deeds. And it goes without saying that, among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, the best in deeds is our Rasūl, on him the blessing of Allah, and peace. Therefore, it is correct to say that the real purpose of creating the entire universe is to bless it with the generous presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (serving as a model right through the Last Day). (Mazharī)

There is something we should also take note of. Allah Ta'ālā said: أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (who among you is better in deed). He has said nothing about the number of deeds. From here we learn that Allah Ta'ālā favors the quality of deed more than He does the abundance or profusion or frequency of good deeds such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Tilāwah of Qur'ān and Dhikr of Allah. This beauty or excellence of deeds has been expressed through the word: احسان (*iḥsān*) in Ḥadīth. Essentially, it means the doing of a deed for the good pleasure of Allah alone with no worldly motive attached to it. Then, it is also necessary to do it in a way that is liked in the sight of Allah. This way has been demonstrated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his conduct and he has made it necessary for his community to follow his Sunnah. In a nutshell, we can say that a little done with total sincerity and according to Sunnah is better than a lot more done with none, or less of the two.

Described in the seventh verse is the condition of those who denied that there was to be a Last Day and a Hereafter. Like chronic deniers of the truth, when they do not understand (or do not want to understand) something, they would dismiss it as nothing but magic.

In the eighth verse, an answer has been given to people who doubted the warnings of punishment given by prophets, peace be on them. Not willing to believe them, they used to ask them if they were true, and if they were, why the punishment they warned them of would not come?

Verses 9 – 14

وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنٰهَا مِنْهُ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَيَـُٔوْسٌ
كَفُوْرٌ ﴿۹﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنٰهُ نَعْمَآءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ ذَهَبَ
السَّيِّاٰتُ عَنِّيْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُوْرٌ ﴿۱۰﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱۱﴾
فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌۢ بَعْضَ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيْكَ وَضَآئِقٌۢ بِهٖ صَدْرُكَ اَنْ
يَّقُوْلُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ اَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهٗ مَلَكٌ ؕ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ نَذِيْرٌ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ ﴿۱۲﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ
فَاْتُوْا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِّثْلِهٖ مُفْتَرَيٰتٍ وَّادْعُوْا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ فَاِلَّمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَكُمْ
فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ
مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then take it away from him, he is then utterly desperate, ungrateful. [9]

And if We give him a taste of comfort after he has suffered from some hardship, he shall say, "Evils have gone away from me." He is, then, over-exulting, arrogant, [10] **except those who are patient and do good deeds. Those are the people for whom there is forgiveness and a great reward.** [11]

It is then expected of you that you will abandon some of what is being revealed to you and that your heart will be straitened thereby, because they say, "Why has a treasure not been sent down to him or an angel not come with him?" You are but a warner. And Allah takes care of everything. [12]

What? Do they say that he has fabricated it? Say, "Then bring ten sūrahs like it, fabricated. And call whomsoever you can, other than Allah, if you are true." [13]

So, if they do not respond to you, then be sure that it has been sent down with the knowledge of Allah and

that there is no god but He. So, do you submit? [14]

Commentary

In the verses appearing above, it has been confirmed that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is a Messenger of Allah and an answer has been given to those who engineer doubts about it. At the beginning, in the first three verses (9-11), an instinctively bad human habit has been mentioned with an instruction to Muslims that they should stay away from it.

That man is naturally fickle-minded and haste-prone, and that he tends to be consumed by his immediate condition and puts all concerns of the past and future out of his mind, has been described in the first two verses (9,10). It has been said: 'If We let man taste a blessing and then take it back, he loses courage and hope and turns ungrateful. And if We let him taste a blessing after he has suffered from some hardship, he forgets all about his suffering and starts bragging and boasting.

In other words, man is given to hurry things, takes the present as everything, does not bother to refer to the past or show concern for the future, therefore, a suffering after a blessing makes him lose hope and slide into ungratefulness. He never thinks that Allah who blessed him first could bless him again. Similarly, if one gets comfort after suffering, then he, rather than recall his past suffering, turn to Allah and be grateful to Him, starts waxing more proud and arrogant. In that state, he forgets his past and goes about thinking that Allah's blessings were his right, he has to have these, and that he remains under the impression that this was how he would continue for the rest of his life. So heedless he becomes that it just does not occur to him that the way the days of suffering did not continue any more, the same thing could happen to the days of comfort and they too could vanish.

Such is the state of human worship of the present and so tragic is the penchant for forgetting the past and the present that a power-hungry man would not even blink to raise the edifice of his power on the blood and dust of another man of power. Always looking up, he would never look down to recall that this had been the fate of the man of power before him. Sad ends and ill fates make no effect on him for power in the present tastes good.

When people start worshipping the present and elect to remain drunk with the state they are in, that is high time for Books of Allah and His Messengers to come. When they do, they bring the lesson-oriented events of the past into sharp focus for heedless man to see things in this perspective and have a little concern for what would happen to them in the future. The lesson they teach is: Ponder over the changing conditions of the universe you are in and get to know the power working behind these – great sermonizers from the Lord!

A perfect believer, in fact, a perfect human being is one who is able to perceive the hidden Power behind every change, revolution, sorrow and comfort, ignore their transitory phases, dismiss their material causes as the sole explanation. The mark of an intelligent person is that he looks at the originator or causer of causes more than he would look at causes, and it is with Him alone that he would relate to as firmly as possible.

In order to make such perfect models of humanity distinct from those having common human temperament, it was said in the third verse (11): إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحَٰتِ (except those who are patient and do good deeds). It means that people exempted from this common human frailty have two qualities: *Ṣabr* (patience) and *al-'Amal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds).

The word: صبر (*ṣabr*) is used to convey a much wider range of meanings in the Arabic language, much wider than conveyed by its translation as 'patience' in English. The real meaning of *ṣabr* is to tie, check, stop or hold back. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, to hold the desiring human self back from going for the impermissible is Ṣabr. Therefore, the sense of Ṣabr (patience) includes abstention from all sins and doings counter to the dictates of the Sharī'ah and *al-'Amal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds) covers all that is obligatory (*farḍ*), necessary (*wājib*), Sunnah and recommended (*mustaḥabb*). The verse now comes to mean that there are people who will not be affected by common human weaknesses. This will happen because they would have faith in Allah and they would fear the reckoning of the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*. They will abstain from everything disliked by Allah and His Rasūl and race towards every deed that brings their pleasure.

At the end of this very verse, also identified there is the recompense of these perfect human beings: أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (Those are the

people for whom there is forgiveness and a great reward – 11)

At this place, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'an uses the word: اذقنا (*adhaqna*: We give them a taste of) for blessing and suffering both. By this device, it was indicated that real blessing and suffering is that of the Hereafter. Neither is the comfort of the mortal world the whole of it, nor is its suffering the whole of it. Instead of that, it should be taken at the level of tasting and sampling so that human beings could have some idea of the blessings and sufferings of the Hereafter. Therefore, neither are the comforts of this world something to be happy about unnecessarily, nor are its sufferings something to grieve about too much. If you were to think, this whole world is, to borrow a commercial term, only a showroom of the Hereafter with sample displays of comfort and suffering.

The fourth verse (12) has been revealed about a particular event. What happened was that the Mushriks of Makkah placed a host of demands before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. One of these was, 'our idols have been maligned in this Qur'an, therefore, we cannot believe in it. So, you should either bring some other Qur'an, or improve it by making alterations in it: ائْتِ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَٰذَا أَوْ بَدِّلْهُ (Bring a Qur'an other than this, or change it – Yunus, 10:15)'. (Al-Baghawi, Mazhari)

Another demand they came up with was, 'we are to believe in your prophesy only when some treasure, like the treasures of the kings of the world, is sent down for you and which you dole out to everyone around. Or that some angel descends from the heavens and hangs out with you everywhere testifying that you were a Messenger of Allah in all certainty.'

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم felt the pinch of these absurd, even disrespectfully audacious demands in his heart. The reason was that he was mercy for all the worlds. It was not possible for him to leave them to their fate and take out the hope that they might someday believe from his heart. Nor was it possible for him to fulfill their absurd demands. To begin with, these demands were based on bland irrationality. If idols, idol-worship and things like that are not called what they are, what would become of right guidance and how would it be done? And then this brain wave of demanding a treasure from a prophet was a loud miss-match with his mission. They had simply taken the station of a prophet on the analogy of the status of a king. Simi-

larly, it is not the practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He would create conditions under which people were materially compelled to start professing the Faith. Otherwise, the whole world is within His power and control. Who could dare profess a belief, and act according to it, against the will of Allah Ta'ālā? But, it is in His infinite wisdom that He has made this world a place of test. No material means are used here to compel people to do something good or to abstain from something bad. Certainly, what is done here is through Scriptures and Apostles. Lines are drawn between virtue and vice. Good and bad are separated. The outcome of each is explained. That is how people are invited and exhorted to do what is right and abstain from what is evil. And if some angel were to be miraculously attached to a prophet to attest to the veracity of his word, it would have posed problems. When no one believed it, he would have faced cash punishment on the spot. In that case, this would have been a modality of compelling people to believe. This kind of belief would have not been believing without seeing which is the essence of belief and faith, nor would there be any choice left for man to make which is the essence of his deed. As for the demands of those people, they were, no doubt, absurd and audacious. But, there is another aspect to it. The very act of making such demands proved that these people were grossly unaware of the status and reality of a messenger and prophet of Allah. They saw no difference between Allah and His Messenger. They even took the messenger to be absolutely powerful like Allah, therefore, they demanded that he should do for them what could not be done by anyone other than Allah.

In brief, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم became very sad because of such demands, this verse was revealed to comfort him and to revitalize his thinking. Addressing him first, it was said: Would you – surrendering to the pressure of these people – leave out some part of the Qur'ān, sent by Allah, which they do not like, such as a part where it talks about the utter helplessness of idols? Would you, then, still be disturbed in the face of such demands? The introduction of the statement in verse 12 with the word: لعلك (*la'allaka*: Is it then expected of you) does not mean that something like that could be expected of him actually. Instead, the purpose is to establish that he was free from such things. He would not leave out any part of the Qur'ān in consideration of their insistence, nor does he have to be sad, concerned and straitened over their demands. The reason is that he has been sent

from Allah as *nadhīr*, as one who warns people against what is harmful for them, then, Allah takes care of the rest for He is powerful over everything. *Nadhīr* has been mentioned here particularly because those being addressed were *kāfirs*, and *kāfirs* deserve nothing but warning against the consequences of their deeds. Otherwise, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not simply *nadhīr*, one who warns, he is *bashīr* too, one who announces glad tidings for people who do good deeds. In addition to what has been said here about the mission of a *nadhīr*, we should understand that, in reality, *nadhīr* is a person who warns out of love and affection against what is evil and harmful. Therefore, in a way, the sense of *bashīr*, a giver of glad tidings, is included in the sense of *nadhīr*, a giver of warning.

In the cited verses, the Mushriks had demanded the kind of miracles they chose. Verses that follow tell them that they already have a miracle, the miracle of the Qur'ān shown at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before them, a miracle even they could not deny. Now if they were demanding these miracles honestly, only to determine the veracity of the messenger of Allah, then, their demand stands accepted (and the miracle is on). And if this demand is simply to gratify their hostility, the showing of miracles demanded by them would remain redundant, for who could expect from such hostile people that they would embrace Islām, even after having seen those miracles. So, the essential point is that the Holy Qur'ān is a clear miracle that cannot be denied.

A refutation of the false doubts engineered by Mushriks and Kāfirs in it has been made in the next two verses (13,14): These people say that the Prophet of Islam has himself made up the Qur'ān – it is no book of Allah.

In answer, it was said: If you really think so, that Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم can make a Qur'ān like this, all by himself, then, you too, better come up with only ten Sūrahs like that. And it is not necessary either that these ten Sūrahs have to be made by any one person. Instead, let everyone in the world join forces and come up with it. And when they fail to make even ten Sūrahs, then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was to tell them: Now the reality stands out loud and clear, for had this Qur'ān been the word of some human being, other human beings could have also been able to make something like this. And that

they all fail to do so is a strong proof of the fact that this Qur'ān has been revealed only with the knowledge of Allah in which there is no room for the least increase or decrease and that it is beyond human power.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has said that they should come up with ten Sūrahs like it. And in another verse it was also said: 'Then, bring a Sūrah the like of this – al-Baqarah, 2:23.'

The reason is that they were first asked to bring ten Sūrahs. They failed to do so. Then, to make their inability look more pronounced, it was said in the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah quoted above: If you take the Qur'ān to be a word of man, then, you too, bring no more than just one Sūrah being the like of it. But, despite this challenge of the Qur'ān, made so easy for them, they could do nothing. It stood proved that the Holy Qur'ān was a miracle, and the Word of Allah without any doubt. Therefore, at the end, it was said: فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ , that is, 'would you now believe and obey, or would you prefer to remain heedless as before?'

Verses 15 – 17

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتَهَا نُوَفِّ اِلَيْهِمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ
فِيْهَا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا لَا يُبْخَسُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِى
الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا النَّارُ ۖ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوْا فِيْهَا وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ وَيَتْلُوْهُ شَاهِدٌ
مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كِتٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِمَامًا وَّرَحْمَةً ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ ۭ
وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهٖ مِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهٗ ۚ فَلَا تَكُ فِىْ مِرْيَةٍ
مِّنْهُ ۤ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾

Those who have been intending (to achieve) the worldly life and its beauty, We shall fully recompense them herein for their acts, and herein they shall not be given less. [15] **Those are the people for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter except fire. And nullified is what they have worked herein and void is what they have been doing.** [16]

So, what about the one who is on a clear path, and there comes after it evidence from within and, before

it, the Book of Mūsā, a guide and a mercy? Such people believe in it. And whoever of the groups disbelieves it, then, Fire is his promised place. So, do not be in doubt about it. Surely, it is the truth from your Lord but most of people do not believe. [17]

Commentary

When warnings of punishment were given to opponents of Islam, they referred to the charities they contributed to and the social welfare work they did. With this testimonial of good deeds in their hands, why would they be punished? It is interesting that, in our time too, there are a lot of unaware Muslims who seem to be suffering from the same doubt. They look at disbelieving non-Muslims who impart a good image of their outward deeds and morals, are active in social work, give out in charities, and make roads, bridges, hospitals, free drinking water counters. This view leads them to hold the opinion that they were better than Muslims. This has been answered in the first (15) of the three verses cited above.

In gist, the answer is that every deed, in order to be accepted as a source of salvation in the Hereafter, must fulfill the first condition of absolute sincerity – that this deed should have been done for the sake of Allah. And the only valid way of doing it for Allah is that it is done in accordance with the way taught and shown in practice by His Messenger. A person who simply does not believe in Allah and His Messenger is a person the sum total of whose deeds and morals is a skeleton without soul. It may look handsome (even slim) but because it has no soul or spirit, it has no weight or effect in the home of the Hereafter. Yes, the contribution of such a person in the mortal world has benefited people. At least in terms of its outward form, what he had done was good, therefore, Allah, the Lord Almighty has, in consideration of His supreme equity and justice, not allowed this deed to go to waste totally. Instead, things were arranged in terms of the objectives the doers of these deeds had before them. If they had worked for recognition in society or an image as philanthropist, man of charity, goodwill or distinction, or had simply aspired for health and material wealth and comfort, Allah Ta'ālā lets them have all this right here in this world. They had no concept of the Hereafter. They had never cared to think of salvation there, nor their deeds, being without the essential spirit, could have qualified them to become deserving of it.

Therefore, no return waits for them there, against their deeds, while the added burden of disbelief and disobedience will keep them in Hell. This was a gist of what was said in the first verse. Now, we can have a look at some of the words used there.

It was said that a person who kept striving for the life of this world and its embellishments gets from Allah the full return for his or her deeds right here in this world. For them, nothing is cut short in *Dunyā*. These are the kind of men and women for whom there is nothing in *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), except the Hell.

It is noteworthy at this point that the expression opted for in the Qur'ān is: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ (those who have been intending) which bypasses something brief like: مَنْ أَرَادَ (those who wanted). The Qur'ānic expression denotes continuity and carries the sense of 'kept striving for' as translated a little earlier. This tells us that it is the condition of people who never wanted to have anything out of what they did but the good of this world. They just never bothered to worry about what would happen in the life to come. As for the person who feels concerned about the Hereafter and does what would bring salvation there and, along with it aims and plans to have his share from the world, then, it is not included in the purview of this verse.

Is this verse related to *kāfirs* or Muslims or to both Muslims and *kāfirs*? Major authorities in Tafsīr differ about it.

The words in the last sentence of the verse – for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter except the fire of Hell – seem to suggest that it is related to *kāfirs*, because a Muslim, no matter how sinning, would ultimately go to Paradise after having undergone the punishment of sins. Therefore, Ḍaḥḥāk and other commentators have interpreted it as related to *kāfirs* only.

Some commentators have said that it refers to Muslims who, through their good deeds, aim to acquire only the comfort, wealth and recognition from this worldly life. In other words, they do their good deeds with the sole intention of having comfort and recognition in the world they live in. And the sentence we are talking about would thus mean that, until they undergo the punishment of their evil deeds, they would have nothing except the fire of Hell.

However, the weightier and clearer approach is to take this verse

as relating to people who do their good deeds only with the intention of acquiring worldly benefits, such as wealth, health and recognition. Those who do so may be *kāfirs* or disbelievers who do not believe in the Hereafter from the very outset. Or, they may be Muslims who believe in the Hereafter theoretically but do not apply their belief to what they do practically. In fact, they would keep all concerns of their life exclusively attached to worldly benefits and interests. From among the early commentators, Mujāhid, Maimūn ibn Mihrān and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضی الله عنه have gone by this view.

This meaning is also supported by the well-known Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ : إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ (Actions are [judged] according to Intentions). What one intends to have by his action gets exactly that. Whoever intends to have *Dunyā* (worldly benefits) gets *Dunyā*. Whoever intends to have *Ākhirah* gets *Ākhirah*. Whoever intends to have both gets both. That all actions depend on intention is a principle approved of in every community and religion. (Qurṭubī)

Therefore, says a Ḥadīth, those who devoted themselves to acts of worship in the mortal world to look respectable before others will be brought forth on the day of *Qiyāmah*. It would be said to them: 'you said your prayers, gave in charity, fought in Jihād, recited the Qur'ān, but you did all that with the intention that you should be known as devotees to prayers, givers in charity, veteran warriors of Jihād and great reciters of Qur'ān. Now you have had what you wanted to have. The honors you were looking for have already come to you in the mortal world. Now, there is no return for your deeds here. And these people will be the first to be thrown into the Hell.'

While reporting this Ḥadīth, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه broke into tears and said, 'the verse of the Qur'ān: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنيَا وَزِينَتَهَا (Those who have been intending (to achieve) the worldly life and its beauty – 15) confirms this Ḥadīth.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā does no injustice to anyone. For the good deed a believer does, he gets some return for it in the mortal world while gets the real reward in the Hereafter. As for a *kāfir* (since he does not bother about what would happen to him in the Hereafter), his account is cleared within his life in the mortal world. The return for his good deeds, if any, is given to him in the form

of worldly wealth, recognition, health and comfort – until comes the time when he reaches the stage of the Hereafter where he is left with nothing that could bring any return there.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that, though a believer looks forward to having prosperity in the mortal world as well, but his intention to have the best of the Hereafter remains on top of everything. Therefore, he gets what he does in the mortal world only to the measure of his needs. However, he does get the larger return and reward in the Hereafter.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once visited the home of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. When he saw virtually nothing in the house but a few things here and there, he said to him: 'please pray that Allah Ta'ālā blesses your *Ummah* too with extended material means. We see Persia and Byzantine. They are very prosperous in this world although they do not worship Allah Ta'ālā.' The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was reclining on a pillow behind his waist. When he heard these words of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, he sat up straight and said, 'O 'Umar, you are still lost in those thoughts. As for these people, they are the ones who have been given the return of their good deeds right here in this world.' (Maẓharī)

Jāmi' Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad report on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'Whoever intends to have (the best of) the Hereafter through his deeds, Allah Ta'ālā makes his heart need-free in this world. He (Himself) takes care of what he must have, and (the desire of) the world comes to him all humbled. And whoever intends to have (the best of) the present world, Allah Ta'ālā makes want and need stand before him to the effect that they can never shake them off. There is no end to his needs because he is constantly being driven by worldly greed. No sooner does one need gets fulfilled, another gaping need stands before him. Countless concerns gang upon him but what he gets is what Allah Ta'ālā has written for him.

Regarding what has been said in this verse: 'those who aimed for worldly life are fully recompensed for their deeds within this world,' someone may raise a doubt. It could be said that there are many people who, despite aiming and striving to have worldly benefits, fail to achieve their objective even in this world and, on occasions, they would

get just about nothing. The answer is that, in this verse, the Qur'ān has dealt with the subject briefly. Details appear in the following verse of Sūrah al-Isrā' (Banī Isrā'īl) where it was said: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهٗ فِيْهَا مَا نَشَآءُ لِمَنْ نُّرِيْدُ (whoever keeps aspiring for the immediate, We shall give soon what We will to whom We will). It means whoever keeps aiming for nothing but worldly life, Allah gives it to him right here within the world, but this giving is restricted by two conditions. Firstly, He gives as much as He wants. It is not necessary to let them have what matches their desires. Secondly, He gives only to a person it is appropriate to give him according to His wisdom. Giving to everyone is not necessary.

The second verse (17) presents the high ground the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the purely sincere believers with him occupy. This is in sharp contrast to those the sum total of whose knowledge and the end of whose quest is restricted to worldly life only – so that the whole world could see that these two groups could not be equal. After having focused on this phenomena, it has been stated that the mission and message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as a prophet and messenger of Allah is open to mankind right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*. Then, it has been stressed that anyone who does not believe in him will be considered, irrespective of what one does, astray and Hell-bound.

In the first sentence, it was asked: Can a denier of the Qur'ān be equal to the one who adheres to the Qur'ān that has come from his Lord? And along with it there is a witness present within it, while a witness earlier to this is the Book of Mūsā عليه السلام that was sent to be followed and to be mercy for people?

The word: *bayyinah* (بينه) appearing in this verse refers to the Qur'ān. As for the meaning of '*shāhid*' (شاهد: evidence), statements of Tafsīr authorities differ. The author of Bayān al-Qur'ān takes '*shāhid*' to mean the miracle of the Qur'ān that is present in the Qur'ān as such. Thus, it comes to mean that those who adhere to the Qur'ān, they already have a witness to the veracity of the Qur'ān within it, that is, its miracle. Then, the other witness has already come in the form of Torah. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had brought it as guidance and mercy for people. The reason is that the Torah confirms the truth of the Qur'ān clearly.

In the second sentence, in order to stress that salvation, up to the

Last Day, depends on faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said that anyone from any religion or community of the world who refuses to have faith in him will have his abode in Jahannam.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'by the One in whose hands rests my life, any Jew or Christian who hears my call and still does not believe in the teachings I have brought, then, he or she will be of the people of Jahannam.'

This should remove the misunderstanding of those who regard the Jews and Christians or the adherents of other religions as being on *ḥaqq* (the truth) on the basis of some outward deeds and consider these to be sufficient for salvation without having faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Qur'ān. This is an open clash with the present *āyah* of the Holy Qur'ān, and the authentic *aḥādīth*. والعياذ بالله (Allah may save us from that!)

Verses 18 – 24

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اُولٰٓئِكَ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلٰى
رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ الْاَشْهَادُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ اَلَا
لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ
يَكُوْنُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
اَوْلِيَآءَ يُضٰعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مَا كَانُوْا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ السَّمْعَ
وَمَا كَانُوْا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ
الْاَخْسَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ اَخْبَتُوْٓا
اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ مَثَلُ
الْفَرِيْقَيْنِ كَالْاَعْمٰى وَالْاَصَمِّ وَالْبَصِيْرِ وَالسَّمِيْعِ هَلْ
يَسْتَوِيٰنِ مَثَلًا اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

And who is more unjust than the one who forges a lie

against Allah? They shall be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses shall say, "These are the ones who lied against their Lord. Beware, the curse of Allah lies on the unjust, [18] **those who prevent (people) from the way of Allah and seek crookedness in it. They, surely they, are disbelievers of the Hereafter."** [19]

They were unable to frustrate (Allah's plan) on the earth, and there were no supporters for them besides Allah. Multiplied for them shall be the punishment. They were not able to hear, nor would they see. [20] **Those are the ones who brought loss to their own selves, and lost for them was all that they used to fabricate.** [21] **Invariably, they are the worst losers in the Hereafter.** [22]

Surely, those who believe and do good deeds and humble their selves before their Lord – those are the people of Paradise. There they shall live forever. [23]

The example of the two groups is like the one blind and deaf and the one seeing and hearing. Are the two equal when compared? Would you still pay no heed? [24]

Verses 25 – 35

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖۤ اِنِّیْ لَكُمْ نَذِیْرٌ مُّبِیْنٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ اَنْ
لَّا تَعْبُدُوْۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّیْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَیْكُمْ عَذَابَ یَوْمٍ اَلِیْمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾
فَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ مَا نَرٰىكَ اِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا
وَمَا نَرٰىكَ اتَّبَعَكَ اِلَّا الَّذِیْنَ هُمْ اَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِیَ الرَّاْیِ ۚ وَمَا نَرٰى
لَكُمْ عَلَیْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍۭ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كٰذِبِیْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ یٰقَوْمِ
اَرَءَیْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَیِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّیْ وَاٰتٰىنِیْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ
فَعُمِّیَتْ عَلَیْكُمْ ؕ اَنُلْزِمُكُمُوْهَا وَاَنْتُمْ لَهَا كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَیٰقَوْمِ
لَاۤ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَیْهِ مَالًا ؕ اِنْ اَجْرِیَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اَنَا بِطَارِدِ
الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ وَلٰكِنِّیْۤ اَرٰىكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُوْنَ
﴿٢٩﴾ وَیٰقَوْمِ مَنْ یَّنْصُرُنِیْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ طَرَدْتُّهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ

﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ
اَقُوْلُ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ وَّلَآ اَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَزْدَرِيْٓ اَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُمُ
اللّٰهُ خَيْرًا ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚۖ اِنِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوْا يٰنُوْحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَاَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَاْتِنَا بِمَا
تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ
اِنْ شَآءَ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِيْٓ اِنْ
اَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ اِنْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّغْوِيَكُمْ ؕ
هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ ۫ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِ
افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَعَلَيَّ اِجْرَامِيْ وَاَنَا بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And We have sent Nūḥ to his people (saying to them): "I am, for you, a clear warner, [25] that you worship none but Allah, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day." [26]

So, the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, said, "We see (that) you are nothing but a man like us. And we do not see you followed by anyone but by the lowest among us who are of shallow opinion, and we do not see in you any superiority over us; rather, think you are liars. [27]

He said, "O my people, tell me when I am on a clear path from my Lord, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself and it has been hidden from your sight. Shall we, then, impose it upon you while you are averse to it? [28] And, O my people, I do not demand from you any wealth for it. My reward is with none but Allah. And I am not to drive the believers away. Surely, they are to meet their Lord, but I see that you are an ignorant people. [29] And, O my people, who will help me against (the punishment of) Allah, if I drive them away? Would you still pay no heed? [30] And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel. And I do not say about those who are contemptible in your eyes that Allah will never

award them any good; Allah is the best- knower of what is in their hearts. (If I do so) then, I shall indeed be one of the unjust." [31]

They said, "O Nūḥ, you have quarreled with us, and quarreled much. Now bring what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful." [32]

He said, "Only Allah will bring it to you, if He so wills, and you cannot frustrate (His will). [33] **And my good counsel will not profit you, even though I wish you the best, if Allah wills to make you go astray. He is your Lord and to Him you shall be made to return."** [34]

Do they still say that he has forged it? Say, "If I have forged it, then, upon me is my sin, and I am free of the sins you commit." [35]

Commentary

When Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام invited his people to believe, they responded with some doubts and objections against the veracity of his mission as a prophet and messenger of Allah. Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام, with the will and permission of Allah, answered their questions. Many primary and subsidiary religious rulings relating to honesty and social living emerge from here as a corollary. This dialogue forms the core of the subject taken up in these verses.

Some questions raised by the disbelievers appear in the third verse (27). Before we take these up, let us first look at the meanings of some of the words there.

The word: ملا (*malā'*) generally means a group. Some leading lexicographers say that a group of the chiefs of a people is called: ملا (*malā'*). *Bashar* (بشر) is translated as human being or man. *Arādhil* (اراذل) is the plural form of *ardhal* (ارذل). It means someone lowly, not having any status or respect among his people. The expression: بَادِیَ الرَّاْیِ (*badiyar-rā'y*) means cursory or shallow opinion.

As for their objections, the first one related to the status of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام as a prophet and messenger: مَا نَرٰىكَ اِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا (We see that you are nothing but a man like us). In effect, they were saying that he ate, drank, walked, slept and woke up like them. How then, they questioned, could they accept this extra-ordinary status of his as a messenger and prophet of God?

They thought that the person who is sent to men as a messenger from Allah should not belong to the genus of man, instead, he should be an angel whose distinct status had to be recognized by everyone, willingly or unwillingly.

This was answered in the fourth verse (28) as follows:

يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَاٰتٰىنِيْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَعُمِّيَتْ
عَلَيْكُمْ اَنُلْزِمُكُمُوْهَا وَاَنْتُمْ لَهَا كٰرِهُوْنَ

> He said, "O my people, tell me when I am on a clear path from my Lord, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself and it has been hidden from your sight. Shall we, then, impose it upon you while you are averse to it?".

Here we are being told that for a *rasūl* or messenger to be a man is not contrary to his mission as a prophet or messenger. In fact, a little thought would show that this is how it should be – that the *rasūl* of men should be a man so that men find it comfortable to learn their religion from him. There is an enormous difference in the mental and emotional make up of men and angels. If an angel were to be sent as a *rasūl*, learning religion from him would have become terribly difficult. The reason is that an angel is not hungry or thirsty or sleepy or plain tired, nor does he have to deal with all those human compulsions. How would he have the feeling for such human weaknesses? And, without this feeling, how could men have followed him deed-wise? This theme has appeared in other verses of the Qur'ān, either explicitly or suggestively, at several places. Bypassing these, they were exhorted to use their reason and realize that it was not the least necessary that a prophet and messenger should not be a man. But, what is necessary is that he brings with him some proof, argument and evidence from Allah Ta'ālā that could make it easy for people to accept that he was definitely a *rasūl* sent by Allah. Those open proofs (*bayyinah*) and binding arguments for common people take the form of miracles shown at the hands of prophets. Therefore, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام said that he had brought with him the clear path, argument and mercy from his Lord. If they had seen it carefully and thought about it, they would not have refused to accept the invitation. But, their aversion and hostility made them blind, hence they opted to deny the truth and became adamant to it.

But, this mercy of Allah Ta'ālā that comes through a prophet is not something which could be caused to fall over the heads of people – until they themselves show their inclination to have it. There is a hint here that the prophet would have passed on the wealth of *'Imān* he had come with to them, if he could, despite their denial and obstinacy. But, this was against Divine law. A blessing is aspired for. People cannot be compelled to have it. From here it also stands proved that it has never been permissible, in any period of a prophet, that people should be compelled to become believers. Even those who continue to spread the ugly propaganda that Islām was spread by the sword are not themselves unaware of the truth of the matter. But, they find it convenient to use the power of a lie to sow seeds of doubt in the hearts of the ignorant only to keep the torches of their hatred burning.

As a side benefit, it has also become easier to understand why an angel was not made a prophet. The reason is that an angel is endowed with supernatural power. He is way distinct from human beings in every facet of his existence. To see him and then to believe in him would have become an exercise in compulsion. With an angel in front of him, who could dare being obstinate – something so conveniently demonstrated before prophets? Then, according to the dictate of the Sharī'ah, if a person believes unwillingly under the threat of some coercive power, his belief and faith is not acceptable. In fact, the ideally desirable thing is to believe without seeing (*al-'Imān bi 'l-ghaib*) – that one believes without having fully observed and witnessed the ultimate subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā.

The second objection they raised was: وَمَا نَرٰىكَ اتَّبَعَكَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ اَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّاْيِ (and we do not see you followed by any one but by the lowest among us who are of shallow opinion – 27). This objection has two aspects: (1) That the people of higher status would have been the first to accept your call, if it was correct and true; and that only such lowly people have accepted it shows that the call itself is not worth accepting. (2) That there is something else that stops us from accepting your call to believe. Suppose we were to believe, then we understand that we too will be taken as Muslims, like them and equal to them and, in rows of prayers as well as in other meetings, we will have to sit with them as equals. This we cannot do.

These people were far from reality and very unaware indeed. Sim-

ply because poor people did not wallow in wealth and pride in office and status, they had elected to berate them as lowly and mundane – although, the thought itself is as ignorant as it can be. Honor and disgrace, reason and understanding are not subservient to wealth and property. Rather, as experience bears out, power and wealth can become intoxicating enough as would stop its possessors from understanding and accepting so many reasonable and correct things. These barriers do not stand before the meek and the poor. They go ahead and accept what is correct and true. This is the reason why the customary Divine practice through the lanes of time gone by has been no other but that the first among those who believe in prophets are none but the weak and the meek. This phenomenon has also been explained in past Scriptures. Pursuant to this, when the blessed letter from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم inviting him to believe reached the Byzantine Emperor, Hiraql, he felt the need to ascertain the truth of the matter – because, he had read the signs of the noble prophets in the Torah and the Injīl. Therefore, he assembled people of Arabia who were visiting Syria at that time and asked them some questions about those signs.

One of these questions was, 'Are those who follow him the poor and the weak among his people, or those who are considered big and notable among them?' He was told, 'They are poor and weak.' Thereupon, Hiraql confessed, 'this is sign of his being a true prophet because those who follow prophets initially are these very poor and weak people.'

In short, taking poor people to be lowly was ignorance on their part. In reality, '*radhīl*' or disgraced is he who does not recognize his creator and sustainer and disobeys what He has asked him to do. Therefore, the venerated Sufyān Ibn Sa'īd Ath-Thawrī, was asked by someone, 'who is mean and disgraced?' He said, 'people who keep flattering rulers and officials.' And Ibn al-A'rabī said, 'mean is he who earns *Dunyā* (benefits of worldly life) by selling his *dīn* (religion).' Someone asked him, 'who is the meanest?' Then, he said, 'a person who ruins his religion and streamlines the worldly life of someone else.' Imām Mālik said, 'mean is he who maligns the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم because they are the greatest benefactors of the entire Muslim Ummah, and the source through which the blessings of *'Imān* and *Sharī'ah* have reached us.'

Returning to the ignorant thought expressed by the objectors, we see that it has been initially refuted in the third verse (29). It has been said that a prophet does not fancy anyone's wealth or property. He takes no compensation for his service or good counsel to people. His compensation is with Allah alone. Therefore, the rich and the poor are equal in his sight. Let the rich not be scared about their wealth for no one would start asking for it once they become believers.

Then, they were told: 'As for the condition you impose that I should remove the poor from my company in order that you could believe, then, let it be very clear that I cannot do that. They may be poor but they are close to the Highest of the high, the greatest honor one can have. Turning such people out is not a right thing to do.'

And: مُلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ (They are surely to meet their Lord) could also mean: If, supposedly, I were to turn them out, when they go to their Lord on the day of *Qiyāmah* and complain, what would I have to say? The subject continues in the fourth verse (30): If I were to turn them out, who would save me from Divine punishment? At the end, it was said: All this is nothing but your ignorance and heedlessness. To you being a man is counter to being a prophet, or you go to the other extreme and demand that poor people should be driven away from his company.

Reported in the fifth verse (31) there is an address that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام gave before his people to announce some matters of principle after he had heard their objections. In this address it has been stressed that the mission of a prophet and messenger does not depend on things they think are necessary for it.

For instance, first it was said: وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِیْ خَزَآىِٕنُ اللّٰهِ (And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah). This carries a refutation of their idea that someone coming from Allah as His messenger should have brought treasures with him giving it out to everyone freely. Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام put it out clearly that the mission of prophets has nothing to do with involving people into the mess of worldly enjoyments. What for would they need all those treasures?

It is also possible that the statement may be refuting the false thought nursed by some people that Allah has given all powers to prophets, even to Auliyā'. Assuming this, it is surmised that they have the treasures of Allah's power in their hands and that they decide

whom to give and whom not to give. So, this declaration of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام makes it clear that Allah Ta'ālā has not entrusted the total control of the treasures of His power not even with any prophet, not to say much about the Auliyā' or men of Allah. However, when they pray or wish, Allah Ta'ālā does answer their prayers and fulfills their wishes with His infinite power.

Secondly, it was said: وَلَآ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ (nor do I have the knowledge of the unseen). Another false idea these people harbored was that a person who is a *rasūl* of Allah Ta'ālā should also be the one who knows what is unseen ('*ālim al-ghayb*). This sentence clarifies that the mission of a prophet and messenger needs no knowledge of the unseen, and why should it when the knowledge of the unseen is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā which no prophet or angel can share with Him. However, Allah Ta'ālā does inform whomever He wills from out of His prophets about the secrets of the unseen as much as He wills. But, because of this, it is not correct to call them '*ālim al-ghayb* (possessor of the knowledge of the unseen) – because, it is not in their power to find out something in the domain of the unseen at their choice.

Thirdly, it was said: وَلَآ أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ (nor do I say that I am an angel). Here we have a refutation of their idea that a *rasūl* should be some angel.

Fourthly, it was stated: In your sight these poor people may appear lowly and disgraceful. But, I cannot say as you say that Allah Ta'ālā will not bless them with what is good, because good relates to one's heart, not wealth, and only Allah knows the secrets of hearts and He knows whose heart is worthy of receiving good and whose heart is not.

Then, it was said: If I too were to start calling them lowly and disgraceful, I too would become unjust.

Verses 36 – 40

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَن يُؤْمِنَ مِن قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَن قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا
تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَ
وَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۚ إِنَّهُم مُّغْرَقُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾
وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأٌ مِّن قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ

قَالَ اِنْ تَسْخَرُوْا مِنَّا فَاِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾
فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿۳۹﴾ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ ۙ قُلْنَا
احْمِلْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَاَهْلَكَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ
الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ اٰمَنَ ؕ وَمَاۤ اٰمَنَ مَعَهٗۤ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ﴿۴۰﴾

And it was revealed to Nūḥ that none of your people would ever believe except those who have already believed: "So, be not distressed by what they have been doing. [36] **And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation. And do not speak to Me about those who crossed the limits – they are to be drowned."** [37]

And he started making the Ark. And whenever the chieftains of his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said, "If you mock at us, we mock at you like you mock at us: [38] **So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humiliate him and upon whom will befall a lasting punishment."** [39]

At last when Our command came and the oven overflowed. We said, "Load in it a pair of two from every kind along with your family – except those against whom the Word has already been spoken – and those who have believed." And there were only a few who had believed with him. [40]

Commentary

Allah Taʿālā had blessed Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام with long years of life extending up to nearly one thousand years. Along with it, he was given a special status in terms of his prophetic mission to invite people to Allah and make their condition better whereby he devoted these long years to keep asking them to believe in the true Faith and in Allah as One. He had to face the harshest of pains in this mission. His people would throw stones at him until he fell down and lost consciousness. But, as soon as he would regain it, he prayed to Allah for the forgiveness of his people for they did not know what they were doing. A generation was followed by the other, and the other by yet another, in a chain and he kept giving his call in the hope that they

might, at some stage, accept the truth.

When centuries passed over this exercise in patience, he complained about their deplorable condition before his Almighty Lord which has been mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ: رَبِّ اِنِّیۡ دَعَوۡتُ قَوۡمِیۡ لَیۡلًا وَّنَهَارًا ، فَلَمۡ یَزِدۡهُمۡ دُعَآءِیۡۤ اِلَّا فِرَارًا (My Lord, I did invite my people [to the truth] night and day. But, my invitation increased them in nothing but flight [in aversion] – 71:5,6) and, after all those long years of hardship, the prayer that this great servant of Allah made was: رَبِّ انۡصُرۡنِیۡ بِمَا كَذَّبُوۡنِ (My Lord, help me because they have belied me – al-Mu'minūn, 23: 26,39).

When the reign of terror let loose by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام became much too excessive, he was addressed by Allah Ta'ālā in the words appearing in the verses cited above. (al-Baghawī, Maẓharī)

Firstly, he was told that, out of his people, those who were to believe had already believed. No one was to believe after that. Their hearts were sealed with their own obstinacy and contumacy. Therefore, he should not grieve about his people any more and feel free of any concern about their failure to believe.

Secondly, he was told that Allah was to send the punishment of flood against those people. Therefore, he should make an ark that could hold his family, as many believers as there were, and what they needed, so that they could embark it when the flood comes and be safe from it. Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام made the ark as he was ordered to. When the initial signs of the flood came before them – that water started overflowing from the earth – Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام was commanded to embark the ark along with his family and the few believers who had believed in him. They were also asked to load a pair each of animals that serve human needs, such as, cow, ox, goat, horse, mule etc. Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام put everyone on the ark as ordered.

At the end it was said that the believers in Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام who boarded the ark were only a few.

This was a gist of the subject as it appears in the cited verses. Now we can turn to the explanation of each verse and deal with issues and problems that emerge therefrom.

In the first verse (36), it was said that it was revealed to Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام that those who were to believe from among his people had already believed. In future, no one else will believe. Therefore, he

should not worry about how they deal with him because one feels the pinch of sorrow only when one expects something good to come from someone. Disappointment is not that bad. It has its own relief. He might as well be disappointed with them. As for the shock felt by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام because of all sorts of pains inflicted by his people on him, arrangements had already been made as indicated the next verse (37) – 'they are to be drowned.' Under these conditions came that invocation of curse for his people on the lips of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام which has been mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ:

رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا ، اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوْٓا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا

> "My Lord, do not leave upon the earth any inhabitant from among the disbelievers. Indeed, if You were to leave them, they will mislead Your servants and will not procreate anyone but the ones wicked and disbelieving (diehards)" – 71:26,27.

In answer to this prayer, the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were drowned en masse.

Boat-Making: The Education of a Prophet

When Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was commanded to make an ark, he knew no ark, nor its making. Therefore, in the next verse (37), he got his first lesson. To orient him to the reality of boat making, it was said: وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَ وَحْيِنَا (And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation).

Ḥadīth reports say that Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn عليه السلام told Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام by means of revelation all about the making of boats. He had used wood from the saul tree (*shorea robusta*) to build this ark.

Some historical narratives give its measurement. It was three hundred yards long, fifty yards in width and thirty yard high, almost a three storied ship. Its ventilators, as customary, opened to the right and the left. Thus, this industry, the first prototype of the ship building industry, began at the hands of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام for the first time through Divine revelation. After that, the progress it made is current history.

All Essential Industries Originated through Revelation

It has been reported on the authority of some elders of early centu-

ries of Islām in at-Ṭibb an-Nabawī of Ḥafiẓ Shamsud-Dīn adh-Dhahabī that all industries essential for human beings owe their origin to the process of Divine revelation through some prophet. Later, improvements kept coming as needed during different times. The first revelation that came to Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام mostly related to rehabilitation of the land and establishment of different industries. The invention of wheel carts for loading and hauling things is part of the chain of inventions.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the well-known Aligarh College, (now the Muslim University of Aligarh, India) used to say more than a hundred years ago that the world has seen inventions of all sorts in moving vehicles but its pivot continued to be the axle and the wheel. It is the common factor between a bullock-cart, a donkey-cart, rails and cars. Therefore, the greatest inventor of moving vehicles is the person who invented the wheel that is the life and soul of a lot of machines. As it was said, this invention unfolded itself at the hands of the first prophet, Sayyidnā Ādam, peace on him, through a Divine revelation.

From here we also learn that industries devoted to essential human needs are so important that the blessed prophets have been taught and trained in these through Divine revelation.

Soon after instructing Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام how he would make an ark, he was told that a flood would come and his people will be drowned and that, at the time, he was not to intercede out of compassion on their behalf.

In the third verse (38), mentioned there is the total lack of concern for their sad end shown by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام during the period he was making the ark. When the chieftains of his people saw him busy with his project under a Divine command, they would ask him, 'what are you doing?' He said, 'a flood is to come, therefore, I am making an ark.' They would mock at him and say, 'we have no water to drink here and this wise man is planning to sail in a boat on this dry land.' In response, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام told them, 'if you mock at us today, then remember the day is sure to come when we shall be laughing at you.' The sense is that conditions would change and events would unfold in a manner that they themselves would become the cause of their being mocked at. For, in reality, ridicule is contrary to

the spiritual station of prophets. It is simply not permissible for anyone, in fact, it is *ḥarām* (unlawful). Says the Holy Qur'ān: لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ (O those who have believed, no people should mock at [other] people – may be, they are better than them – 49:11) Therefore, the mocking referred to here is a pragmatic response to their mockery. This is like saying, 'when you are seized by the punishment, we shall be telling you that this was the outcome of your mockery.' This is as it was said after that in the fourth verse (39): 'So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humble him, and upon whom will befall the lasting punishment.' The first punishment refers to the punishment in the mortal world, and the 'lasting punishment' means the never-ending punishment of the Hereafter.

From the fifth verse (40) begins the description of the coming of the flood, related instructions and events as they unfolded. So, first it was said: حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ (At last, when Our command came and the oven overflowed).

The word: تنور (*tannūr*: oven) is used in more than one sense. The Earth's floor is called an oven. The oven that bakes bread is also a *tannūr*. A raised part of the land is also referred to as *tannūr*. Therefore, some of the Tafsīr authorities have said that, at this place, '*tannūr*' means the surface of the land in that water started overflowing from it. Some of them have said that it means the *tannūr* of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام that was located at '*ainul- wardah*' in Syria – and water overflowed from it. Some others said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ's عليه السلام own *tannūr* was located in Kūfah and that was what it means. Most commentators – Sayyidnā Ḥasan, Mujāhid, Sha'bī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and others – have gone by this view.

As for Sha'bī, he used to say on oath that this *tannūr* was located in a secluded quarter of the city of Kūfah, and that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had built his ark in the mosque of Kūfah. This *tannūr* was right by the entrance to this mosque. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, 'when you see water overflowing from the oven in your home, know that the flood has come.' (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī)

Commentator al-Qurṭubī said: The sayings of commentators appear to be different as to the meaning of *tannūr*, but this, in reality, is not a difference. When water began to bulge out, it overflowed from the

bread baking oven, and from out of the surface of the land, and from the oven of 'Ainul-Wardah in Syria. The Holy Qur'ān has said explicitly: فَفَتَحْنَآ اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ وَّفَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُيُوْنًا (Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down and caused the earth to burst out with springs – al-Qamar, 54:11).

In his statement, Sha'bi has also said that this grand mosque of Kūfah has its own distinct status after al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, al-Masjid an-Nabawii and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.

Later in the verse, it was said: When the flood had started, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was commanded: اِحْمِلْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ (Load in it a pair of two from every kind).

This tells us that all kinds of animals were not loaded in the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Loaded there were animals born to a pair of male and female and which cannot survive in water. Therefore, all sea life stands excluded from here and so do land based life forms born without male-female conjunction. This leaves only domestic animals like the cow, ox, water buffalo, goat etc.

This removes the possible doubt as to how could the ark hold that many animals.

After that, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was asked to have his family members – other than the disbelieving ones – board the ark, as well as those who had believed in him, though they were only a few.

The exact number of those who sailed on the ark has not been determined in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. It has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that their total number was eighty, which included three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام – Sām, Ḥām, Yāfith – and the three of their wives. The fourth son had stayed with the disbelievers and was drowned with them.

Verses 41 - 44

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوْا فِيْهَا بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖىهَا وَمُرْسٰىهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ وَهِيَ تَجْرِيْ بِهِمْ فِيْ مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ قف وَنَادٰى نُوْحُ ۨابْنَهٗ وَكَانَ فِيْ مَعْزِلٍ يّٰبُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَّعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَّعَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ سَاٰوِيْۤ اِلٰى جَبَلٍ يَّعْصِمُنِيْ مِنَ الْمَآءِ ؕ قَالَ

لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللّٰهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ ۚ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ
فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَقِيلَ يٰأَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكِ وَيٰسَمَاءُ
أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ
وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And he said, "Embark it. With the name of Allah it sails and anchors. Surely, my Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [41]

And it was sailing with them amidst the waves like mountains. And Nūḥ called out to his son, who was at an isolated place, "O my child, come on board with us, and do not be in the company of the disbelievers." [42] **He said, "I shall take shelter on a mountain which will save me from the water." He said, "There is no saver today from the command of Allah, except the one to whom He shows mercy." And the waves rose high between the two, and he was among the drowned.** [43]

And it was said, "O earth, suck in your water, and O heaven, stop." And water subsided, and the matter was over. And it (the Ark) came to rest on the Jūdiyy, and it was said, "Curse be upon the wrongdoers." [44]

Commentary

Etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance

The first verse (41) teaches the etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance. One should board by saying: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖهَا وَمُرْسٰهَا (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). The word: مجرى (*majrā* pronounced according to the reading (*qirā'ah*) of Imām Ḥafṣ as '*majrāy*' with *fatḥah* on the letter *mīm* and a major <u>*Imālah*</u> [inclination] on the letter *rā*) means to sail or to move, and مرسى (*mursā*) means to stop or anchor. The sense is that the moving of this mode of transport owes itself to the power of Allah, and is with His name alone, as well as its stopping which is also subservient to nothing but His power.

Every conveyance moves and stops only with the power of Allah Ta'ālā

Even a little thought would show that no conveyance, a boat or any other mode of transport that moves on land (or flies in the air) is really

within one's own power, neither its creating and making, nor its moving and stopping. A shallow view of things leads man to assume that he is the one who has manufactured it and made it move. The reality lies elsewhere. It does not take much to realize that man has not created iron, wood, brass, aluminum etc. which serve as raw material that go into the making of these modes of conveyance. And it is also clear that it does not lie in his control to create on his own a gram of iron or a foot of wood. Then, who gave them the intelligence to design and produce all sorts of mechanical parts and instruments? How did he do that? Did he create his own intelligence? Had it been within the power of man, no one in this wide world would have remained dumb. Everyone would have been a Plato and Aristotle in his field. So, man puts together wood and iron and mechanical support from all sides, makes the body and frame for the conveyance. Now he needs to haul tons of weight easily and quickly on the land or in the air. He needs power to do that. It may come through petrol, gas or hydro-electricity. Has man created any of these? Did he create the petrol or gas, or water, or oxygen, or hydrogen?

If we were to look at things impartially, we will realize that even in this age of great scientific advancement, the helplessness of man is still visible and it is true that the moving and stopping of every conveyance rests within the ultimate control of the creator of this universe.

The process of inventing things and making them work makes inventors self-centered. They start living in a hall of mirrors. They congratulate themselves to the limit that they lose touch with the reality of things on a canvass larger than what they invent. Allah Taʿālā tells them through his prophets that there is more to their making that they fail to see: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖىهَا وَمُرْسٰىهَا (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). This is the reality. A brief statement, but very comprehensive. In fact, it is a key to a door. Once he enters it, he lives in this mortal world but turns into a citizen of the spiritual universe – seeing the beauty of the Lord everywhere in it.

From here unfolds the difference between the world of a believer and the world of a disbeliever. Both ride. But, when a believer steps in there, the conveyance does not simply shorten his travel distances on the land, it introduces him to the one higher, more sublime.

As stated in the second (42) and third (43) verse, when the whole family of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had boarded the ark, a son whose name has been reported as Kin'ān (Canaan) was left out. Out of his paternal compassion, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام called out to him asking him to come on board and warning him that he should not stay in the company of disbelievers otherwise he would be drowned with them. This young man was already in league with those disbelieving enemies, in fact, was himself a disbeliever. But, in all likelihood, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did not know that he was a disbeliever. And even if he did know that, the good counsel he gave to his son to board the boat and leave the company of the disbelievers was in the spirit of asking him to repent from disbelief and enter the fold of faith. But, the unfortunate son still took the flood to be something that will pass away and told him not to worry about him for he would be safe from the flood by climbing a mountain. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام warned him again that nothing was going to save anyone, not even a mountain, from the punishment of Allah on that day and that there was no way one could remain safe from it unless Allah Himself were to show mercy to him. This father-son dialogue was on from a distance when rose a wave of the flood and took him down and away. Historical reports say that the level of the Flood was fifteen yards above the highest mountain peak and according to some other reports, it was forty yards high.

In the fourth verse (44), the recession of the flood and the return of things to normal conditions has been described in a particular manner. Addressing the earth, Allah Ta'ālā commanded: يَٰٓأَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَآءَكِ (O earth, suck in your water). The sense was that the amount of water which had bulged out from the earth was to be taken back in by the earth. The sky was commanded to stop raining. The water from rains that had already accumulated on the earth, nature channeled it into rivers and streams for human beings to benefit by it. (Tafsīr Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has given His commands by addressing the heaven and the earth, although these are no sensate entities, at least outwardly. Therefore, some commentators have taken it in a figurative sense. But, the fact of the matter is that, in terms of our perception, things in the world which appear non-conscious, insensate, and lifeless are, in all reality, live and conscious. Yes, their consciousness and perception are not of a level as given to humankind and oth-

ers, therefore, by declaring them to be inanimate, they were not obligated with the percepts and injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān confirm it, such as: وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ (and there is no such thing which does not glorify Him with praises – 17:44). And it is obvious that the glorification of Allah Ta'ālā depends on knowing Him, and knowing, on reason and consciousness. This tells us that everything has reason and consciousness according to its respective capacity. From it, it recognizes its creator and whatever it has been assigned to do by Him. Everything knows it fully well and keeps doing it staunchly as due. The verse of the Qur'ān: أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى (gave each thing its form then guided [it] – Ṭāhā, 20:50) means exactly this. Therefore, in this verse, if the address to the heaven and the earth is taken in the real sense, it does not matter. Sage Rūmī said:

خاک و باد و آب و آتش بنده اند　　بامن وتو مرده باحق زنده اند

Dust, air, water and fire are all 'servants'

For you and me, dead, but with Him, live.

At the end of the fourth verse (44), it was said that the heaven and the earth obeyed the orders and the matter of the flood was all over. The Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام came to rest on the Mount Jūdiyy and it was declared that the unjust people have been cast far 'away from the mercy of Allah' – (which is what curse is).

Mount Jūdiyy still stands there by that name. Geographically, it is located on the border of Armenia near Ibn 'Umar Island north of Mousil in 'Iraq, the real home of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام. This is a mountain range, part of which is called Jūdiyy. Another part of it is known as Ararāt. In the present Torah, the place where the Ark came to rest has been identified as Mount Ararāt. As obvious, there is not much of a contradiction in these two reports. But, well-known old historical accounts also say that the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام had come to rest on Mount Jūdiyy.

These accounts also mention that pieces of this ark are still there at many places in 'Iraq. These are kept and used as a relic.

According to Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī and al-Baghawī, Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیہ السلام had embarked the Ark on the tenth of the month of Rajab. For six months, this ark sailed on the waters of the flood. When it reached the spot where Baytullah was, it made seven circuits. Allah Ta'ālā had

raised His House higher from being submerged. Then, on the tenth of Muḥarram, the day of 'Āshūrā', the flood subsided and the ark came to rest at the Mount of Jūdiyy. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام observed a thanksgiving fast on that day and asked everyone on the ark to do the same. Some reports say that even animals that had shared the ark fasted on that day. (Maẓharī and Qurṭubī)

The importance of the day of 'Āshūrā', that is, the tenth of Muḥarram, has been recognized in all religious codes of the blessed prophets. In early Islām – before the fasts of Ramaḍān became obligatory – fasting on the day of 'Āshūrā' was *farḍ*. It is no more *farḍ* after the revelation of the obligatory status of fasting in Ramaḍān, but it continues to be a practice of prophets, and a source of reward forever.

Verses 45 – 49

وَنَادٰى نُوْحٌ رَّبَّهٗ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنَّ ابْنِىْ مِنْ اَهْلِىْ وَاِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ
وَاَنْتَ اَحْكَمُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ يٰنُوْحُ اِنَّهٗ لَيْسَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ ۚ
اِنَّهٗ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ ۖ فَلَا تَسْـَٔلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۭ اِنِّىْٓ
اَعِظُكَ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْٓ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ اَنْ
اَسْـَٔلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِىْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۭ وَاِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِىْ وَتَرْحَمْنِىْٓ اَكُنْ مِّنَ
الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قِيْلَ يٰنُوْحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلٰمٍ مِّنَّا وَبَرَكٰتٍ عَلَيْكَ
وَعَلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَّعَكَ ۭ وَاُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ
اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ تِلْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَاۗءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ اِلَيْكَ ۚ مَا كُنْتَ
تَعْلَمُهَآ اَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَا ۭ فَاصْبِرْ ۭ اِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ
لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And Nūḥ called unto his Lord and said, "My Lord, my son is a part of my family, and surely, Your promise is true, and You are the greatest of all judges." [45] **He said, "O Nūḥ, surely, he is not a part of your family. Indeed, he is (a man of) bad deeds. So do not ask Me something of which you have no knowledge. I counsel you not to be among the ignorant.** [46]

He said, "My Lord, I seek refuge with You against that I

ask You something of which I have no knowledge. And if You do not forgive me and do not show mercy to me, I shall be among the losers." [47]

It was said, "O Nūḥ, disembark in peace from Us and with blessings upon you and upon the peoples (springing) from those with you. And there are peoples whom We shall give some enjoyment, then a painful punishment from Us will visit them."[48]

These are some reports from the unseen (events) which We reveal to you. You did not know them before this, neither you nor your people. So, be patient. Surely, the end is in favor of the God-fearing. [49]

Commentary

The remaining account of the flood associated with the name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, along with instructions related to it, appears in the five verses cited above.

When Can'aan, the son of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, did not board the ark despite the counsel and call of his esteemed father who was still concerned emotionally as he saw his son surrounded by the waves of the flood. His filial love knocked at another door. He turned to his Lord and prayed to Him on the basis of His promise that He would save his family from the flood, and that His promise was true. But, conditions were alarming and his son who was part of his family was going to be swallowed by the flood. The only court of appeal he could now go to was the court of the most just of judges for everything was in His power and control and that He could still save him from the flood.

In the second verse (46), came a stern response from Allah Ta'ālā whereby Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was told that this son was no more a part of his family because he was not good and right in what he did. Therefore, it was not proper for him to approach Him with some request while being unaware of the true state of affairs. Then came the mollifying remark that the good counsel was being given to him so that he too does not become one of the ignorant.

Two things come out from what was said by Allah Ta'ālā:

1. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did not know about the disbelief of his son clearly and fully. He thought he was a hypocrite, so he still took him to

be a believer. Therefore, identifying him as a part of his family, he went ahead and prayed that he be saved from the flood. Otherwise, had he known the true state of affairs about him, he would have not made such a prayer. The reason is that he was already instructed in clear terms that he should not, once the flood comes, speak about those who had crossed the limit as it appears in verse 37 earlier وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِىْ فِى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا، اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ. After this clear and explicit injunction, it was impossible for a prophet of God that he would venture to do something against it. The only possible explanation for this could be that, as suggested by the author of Bayān al-Qur'ān, the desired objective of this prayer is that his son becomes a believer and not that he be saved from the flood under his present condition. But, Allah Ta'ālā has not taken Sayyidnā Nūḥ's علیه السلام lack of knowledge about the disbelief of his son and the prayer for his deliverance based on it as sound excuses. Therefore, he was questioned as to why he would make such a prayer. This is a slip at the highest level of the station of a prophet which Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام would himself refer to on the day of Resurrection when the whole creation will request him to intercede with the Lord on their behalf. He would excuse himself by saying what had happened to him, therefore, he would not dare any intercession.

Prayer for the disbelieving and the unjust is not permissible

A religious rule of conduct that we learn about here is that one should first find out whether or not the objective for which he is making a prayer is permissible and *ḥalāl* (lawful). It is prohibited to make *Du'ā* (prayer) under doubtful circumstances. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to al-Bayḍāwī reports that since this verse tells us about the prohibition of *Du'ā* under doubtful circumstances, it is automatically inferred from it that it will be all the more prohibited to pray for anything known to be impermissible and unlawful.

This rule also helps us realize the absence of discretion among modern day Shaykhs (spiritual masters) who have become used to raising their hands of prayer for anyone who comes in asking for some prayer to be made for him. Most of the time, they know that this person is not on the right, or is unjust, in the case for which he is asking the Shaykh to pray. Or, the person is asking the Shaykh to pray for a purpose that is not lawful for him, may be this person is looking for a particular job or office through which he will become involved in earn-

ing unlawfully, or succeed in it by usurping someone's right.

When attending circumstances are known, such prayers are unlawful and impermissible after all. Even if the circumstances are doubtful, taking the initiative to make Du'ā, without first getting to know the circumstances as they are and the lawfulness of the matter in question, is also not appropriate.

Brotherly relations between believers and disbelievers

2. The second religious ruling that emerges from here is that a believer and a disbeliever may be blood relatives to each other, but when it comes to religious and collective matters, this kinship will have no effect. A person may be high born, he may come from the progeny of men of high spiritual status, so much so that one may even have the honor of being among the progeny of our most noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, this high lineage and this prophetic connection will also not be taken into consideration as a factor in religious matters, if the person is not a believer. In religion, everything functionally depends on faith, goodness and the fear of Allah. One who is good in deeds and fears Allah, he is ours. If not like that, he is an alien.

Had concessions based on kinship been given even in religious matters, brothers would have not crossed swords against each other in the battlefields of Badr and Uḥud. It is common knowledge among Muslims that the battles of Badr, Uḥud and al-Aḥzāb were fought among individuals coming from the same families. This clearly demonstrates that Islamic nationality or brotherhood does not hinge on lineal bond or geographical or linguistic unity. Instead, it revolves round faith and deed. All believers, residents of any country, members of any family and speakers of any language, are a single nation, a single brotherhood. The Qur'ānic verse: إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ (The believers are but brothers – 40:10) means just this. Then, those who are deprived of faith and good deeds, they are not members of the Islamic brotherhood. The Holy Qur'ān has made this reality all the more clear through the words spoken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: إِنَّا بُرَءٰؤُا مِنكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ (Indeed, we have nothing to do with you and with whatever you worship other than Allah – al-Mumtaḥinah, 60:4).

This humble writer has restricted the above rule to the 'religious matters' only for the reason that, in worldly matters, demonstrating

good social behavior, moral grace, favor and generosity is something different. It is quite permissible to deal even with someone not good with these graces, in fact, it is recommended, and is an act worthy of *thawāb* (reward). Countless instances where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions have treated non-Muslims with compassion, favor and good grace are sufficient to prove this.

In our time, the edifice of nationalities is raised on the foundations of homeland, language or color whereby Muslims are segregated into one or the other 'nation' under false banners. This is contrary to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, and amounts to rising in rebellion against the principles of political and social management enunciated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Mentioned in the third verse (47) is the apology tendered by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. In gist, it is a return to Allah in submission and entreaty, a prayer for the protection of Allah, His forgiveness for past omissions, and a request for His mercy.

From here we learn that, should one commit a mistake, let him not rely on his personal resolve to stay safe from it in the future. He should, rather, seek the protection of Allah Ta'ālā and pray to Him that He is the One who can keep him safe from errors and sins.

In the fourth verse (48), described there is the end of the flood. When the flood subsided, the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام came to rest on Mount Judiyy, the earth sucked its water back, standing water from the heaven got preserved in the form of rivers and streams making the land habitable. Then, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was asked to disembark, go down the mountain, for there was nothing to worry about. Blessings of Allah will be with him keeping him secure from any calamities and hardships and that he will prosper in terms of peace, wealth and children.

According to this statement, the entire post-flood human population of the world is the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. At another place, the Qur'ān has said: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ (and those remaining We made his descendants – 37:77). Therefore, historians refer to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as the second Ādam.

Then, the promise of peace and blessing made to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is not limited to his person, instead, it was said: وَعَلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَّعَكَ (and

upon the peoples [springing] from those with you). Those who boarded the ark with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام have been identified with the word: امم (*umam*) which is the plural form of امة (*ummah*: community). It releases the sense that those on board the ark consisted of different nationalities and communities, although we already know that those who had embarked the ark were mostly people from the family of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in addition to a few other believers as well. So, they were identified as different communities and nationalities in the sense that different communities and nationalities will spring forth from their future generations. This tells us that the whole human race to be born up to the day of Qiyāmah is included under the sense of the words: أُمَمٍ مِّمَّن مَّعَكَ (peoples [springing] from those with you).

This was the reason why it became necessary to elaborate the subject of peace and blessing as the coming generation would include believers and disbelievers both. As for peace and blessing for believers, it is correct in its general sense for they would have peace and blessing in the mortal world as well as in the Hereafter. But, the disbelievers from this generation would have been consigned to the everlasting punishment of Hell. How would it be correct to say that they would be recipients of peace and blessing? Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: وَأُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (And there are peoples whom We shall give some enjoyment, then a painful punishment from Us will visit them). It means that the peace and blessing they will enjoy in the mortal world is like a feast thrown open to all, friends and foes alike. Also participating in it will be those who take to disbelief from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, but the salvation and prosperity of the Hereafter shall be reserved for believers only. The disbeliever will be given the return for his good deeds within the mortal world and there will be nothing left for him to receive in the Hereafter where he will find nothing but punishment waiting for him.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to know of this detailed information about Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the Flood through revelation, he related it to his people – this event, then became a standing witness to the veracity of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself as a genuine prophet. To alert him to this situation, it was said in the fifth verse (49): 'As for Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the flood that came during his time, these were pieces of information that lay in the domain of the

unseen. He had no knowledge of it beforehand, nor his people, the Arabs, knew about it. It was he who told them about it. What was the explanation for it? How could it happen? There was no other explanation but that Allah had Himself told him about it through revelation, because, had his people been educated and conversant with world history, it could be surmised that he had related these events after having heard them from those learned people. But, when the whole lot of his people was unaware of these events and their prophet too had never gone to another country to get his education there, then, the only inlet of this information stands determined conclusively. It was Waḥy, the divine revelation, which is a clear proof that the prophet is a true messenger of Allah.

To console the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said at the end of the verse that there were so many open proofs to the fact that he was a prophet and messenger of Allah. If there were some unfortunate human beings that see the sun yet insist that they do not, even challenge him and confront him, then, he should look at the role model of his predecessor, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, peace on him. He spent one thousand years of his long life suffering from pain inflicted by his people. He remained patient. Let him stay as patient as he was – because, it stands determined that success will ultimately kiss the hands of those patient and God-fearing.

Verses 50 – 68

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ط قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلٰهٍ
غَيْرُهُ ط إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ يٰقَوْمِ لَآ أَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
أَجْرًا ط إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ ط أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾
وَيٰقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ
مِّدْرَارًا وَّيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلٰى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾
قَالُوْا يٰهُوْدُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِيْٓ اٰلِهَتِنَا عَنْ
قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِنْ نَّقُوْلُ إِلَّا اعْتَرٰىكَ
بَعْضُ اٰلِهَتِنَا بِسُوْٓءٍ ط قَالَ إِنِّيْٓ أُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ وَاشْهَدُوْٓا أَنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ

مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَكِيْدُوْنِيْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ
﴿٥٥﴾ اِنِّيْ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ رَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ ؕ مَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ
اٰخِذٌۢ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَّاۤ اُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖۤ اِلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّيْ
قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَضُرُّوْنَهٗ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
حَفِيْظٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُوْدًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ
بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا ۚ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ ۟
جَحَدُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهٗ وَاتَّبَعُوْۤا اَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ
عَنِيْدٍ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَاُتْبِعُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَّيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ
عَادًا كَفَرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ ؕ اَلَا بُعْدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُوْدٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ ع وَاِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ
اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا ۘ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ هُوَ
اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْۤا
اِلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ قَرِيْبٌ مُّجِيْبٌ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوْا يٰصٰلِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْنَا
مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هٰذَاۤ اَتَنْهٰىنَاۤ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَاِنَّنَا لَفِيْ
شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَاۤ اِلَيْهِ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ
عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَاٰتٰىنِيْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
اِنْ عَصَيْتُهٗ ۫ فَمَا تَزِيْدُوْنَنِيْ غَيْرَ تَخْسِيْرٍ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ هٰذِهٖ
نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْۤ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا
بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيْبٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوْا
فِيْ دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوْبٍ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صٰلِحًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنْ
خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيْزُ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيْنَ

ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ كَأَنْ لَّمْ
يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۗ أَلَآ إِنَّ ثَمُودَا۟ كَفَرُوا۟ رَبَّهُمْ ۗ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ
ع
﴿٦٨﴾

And to 'Ād (We sent) their brother Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. You are nothing but fabricators. [50] O my people, I ask you no reward for it. My reward is only on the One who created me. Have you, then, no sense? [51] And O my people, seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn to Him in repentance, so that He may release the heavens pouring upon you and may increase you in strength beside your strength, and do not turn away like sinners." [52]

They said, "O Hūd, you did not bring to us any proof, and we are not to leave our gods on your statement, and we are not to believe in you. [53] We do not say except that some of our gods have subjected you to some evil." He said, "I make Allah my witness, and you be witness that I have nothing to do with what you take as gods besides Him. [54] So, try your plans against me, all of you together, then give me no respite. [55] I place my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but He takes it by the forelock. Surely, my Lord is on a straight path. [56] Now, if you turn away, I have already conveyed to you what I was sent to you with. And my Lord will replace you with some other people, and you cannot do Him any harm. Surely, my Lord is guardian over every thing." [57]

And when came Our command, We saved Hūd and those who believed along with him, out of mercy from Us, and We did save them from a heavy punishment. [58]

That was the tribe of 'Ād who rejected the signs of their Lord, disobeyed their Messengers and followed the dictates of every obstinate tyrant! [59] And a curse was made to pursue them in this world and on the Day of Doom. Lo! The people of 'Ād disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon 'Ād, the people of Hūd. [60]

And to (the people of) Thamūd (We sent) their brother,

Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. He has created you from earth and made you settle therein. So, seek His forgiveness, then turn to Him in repentance. Surely, my Lord is near, responding." [61]

They said, "O Ṣāliḥ, we had hopes in you before this. Do you ask us not to worship what our fathers worshipped? And we are certainly in confounding doubt about what you are calling us to." [62]

He said, "O my people, tell me: When I am on a clear path, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself, who will then come to my help against Allah, if I disobey Him? So, you add on to me nothing but a loss. [63] **And O my people, this is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her free to eat in the land of Allah and do not even touch her with evil (intention), lest a near punishment should seize you."** [64]

Then they slaughtered her. So, he said, "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only). That is a promise, not going to be false." [65]

So, when came Our command, We saved Ṣāliḥ and those who believed along with Him, out of mercy from Us, and (We saved them) from the disgrace of that day. Surely, your Lord is the Powerful, the All Mighty. [66]

And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry, and they were found dead in their homes, fallen on their knees, [67] **as though they had never lived there. Lo! The people of Thamūd disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon the people of Thamūd.** [68]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first eleven verses (50-60) from the ones cited above are the the events of the revered prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام by whose name this Sūrah is identified. Appearing in this Sūrah, there are events related to seven blessed prophets and their peoples from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to Sayyidnā Mūsā described in the unique style of the Holy Qur'ān. They have such flashes of lesson and advice that no one with a responsive and discerning heart can remain unaffected by them. Apart from their instructive aspects, they contain many principals and subsidiaries of faith and good deed as well as

guidance one can make use of in comparable situations.

As for stories and events taken up here, they relate to seven prophets, but the Sūrah has been identified with the name of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام, which shows that the story of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام has a particular significance in it.

Allah Ta'ālā had sent Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام as a prophet to the people of 'Ād. They were known for their physical build, strength and bravery. Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام was also one of them – as indicated in: اخاهم هودا (their brother, Hūd – 50). How regrettable that a people so strong and brave had lost their reason to the extent that they had taken to worshipping gods they had carved out of stones with their own hands.

Three basic principles of the call of faith Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام presented before his people have been mentioned in the first three verses (50-52). One: Belief in Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah) and that taking someone or something else worthy of worship other than Allah is nothing but a lie and fabrication. Two: He was a Messenger of Allah. He had come with the call of Tauḥīd for them. This was the mission of his life. He was working hard against heavy odds to convey the message to them. Why would he do that? If they thought about it, they would see that he was not asking them to pay for his services, nor did he receive any material benefits from them. If he did not honestly believe it to be the will and command of Allah, and right and true, why would he go to all that trouble of inviting them to believe and live a better life?

Payment for *Da'wah* work

The Holy Qur'ān reports almost all prophets saying that they do not ask for any payment against the duty of Da'wah they do. This shows that, in case payment is accepted (as pre-arranged or as implied by custom) against Da'wah and Tablīgh, the call remains ineffective. Experience bears it out that those who take wages for their religious sermons, addresses and good counsels leave the hearts of their audience unchanged at the end of the exercise.

Three: Forgiveness and Repentance: He exhorted them to seek forgiveness from Allah Ta'ālā for their disbelief and for sins they had committed in their past life. Then, for future, let them be ashamed of what they had done, repent and promise to themselves making a firm

resolve and commitment that they would never go even near them. If they sincerely went through this process of seeking forgiveness from Allah and showing repentance before Him, the result will be that they shall, no doubt, be blessed with everlasting prosperity in the Hereafter, but in the mortal world too, they will themselves notice its many benefits coming to them. Firstly, the act of Istighfār and Taubah will remove the distress of famine from them. Heavy rains will come when due making their provisions sumptuous. Secondly, it would increase their strength and power.

The word: قوه (*quwwah*) has been used here in a general sense which includes physical strength and power as well as the strength that comes from increases in wealth and children.

This tells that Taubah and Istighfār have a special property of their own – that their practitioner is blessed with extended means of sustenance and satisfying increase in wealth and children, even in this mortal world.

Captives of their ignorant ways, the people of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام brushed his call aside by saying, in effect, 'a miracle would have been something, which you did not show to us. You are simply saying what you have to say. Now, just because what you are saying, we are not going to leave our gods we worship and, in you, we are not going to believe. In fact, we believe that you have lost your mind as a result of maligning our gods, otherwise you would not be saying all that.'

Demonstrating his prophetic courage, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام said in response, 'If you would not listen to me, then, hear this – I make Allah my witness and you too bear witness that I am disgusted with all your gods other than Allah. Now, do, you and your gods, whatever you all can do against me and do not even give me the least respite.'

And he said, 'this I am telling you seriously for I have placed my trust in Allah who is my Lord and your Lord as well. He holds every creature that walks on the earth by the forelock. There is no one around who can dare cause harm or loss to anyone even to the measure of a tiny particle without His will and permission. Surely, my Lord is on the straight path, that is, one who takes the straight path finds Him and is helped by Him.'

Here was one man against a whole people making a claim so

strong and loud and putting them to shame and no one from a people so strong and brave dared budge before him! This was a standing miracle of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام – which also provides an answer to their complaint that he did not show them a miracle. And it also provides yet another answer to their audacious comment that their gods had made him mentally deranged for, had their gods been exercising this kind of power, they would have never left him alive after what he had said against them.

After that, he said, 'If you continue to be so insanely opposed to truth, then, you must understand that I have already conveyed to you the message with which I have been sent. Now, its logical outcome could be no other but that the wrath and punishment of Allah falls on you and you are destroyed to the last man and my Lord brings another people to settle on this land. As for what you are doing against this matter of truth, you are simply hurting yourself, not Allah. Surely, my Lord oversees everything and He is aware of all your deeds and thoughts.'

They were the kind of people who would not listen to anything. They chose to stick to their contumacy. Then, the punishment of Allah descended upon them in the form of a stormy wind that uprooted their homes and trees. Living entities, human and animal, would be blown up high into the air and ricochet back on to the ground faces down. Human cries could be heard coming from the sky – until this whole set of people, unique in their size and strength, were annihilated to the last man.

When came the command to send Divine punishment on these people, Allah Ta'ālā, in accordance with His customary practice, saved His prophet and his companions from this severe punishment as they were ordered to leave that area before the punishment came.

After having mentioned the event relating to the people of 'Ād and the punishment that came upon them, an exhortation was necessary so that others could learn their lesson from it. So, it was said: That was the tribe of 'Ād! They rejected the signs of their Lord, disobeyed their Messengers yet kept following the dictates of those who were tyrannical and obstinate.

The outcome was that curse, that is, the state of being away from

the mercy of Allah, kept pursuing them in the mortal world and will keep pursuing them similarly on the day of Qiyāmah as well.

From this event, we learn that the people of 'Ād were overtaken by a stormy wind. But, it appears in Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:41) that they were destroyed by a harsh sound (*aṣ-ṣaiḥah*: The Cry, The Shriek). It is possible that both kinds of punishments had visited the people of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام.

The event relating to the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام ends here.

After that, the next eight verses (61-68) carry the story of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, peace be upon him. He was sent to the people of Thamūd, another branch of the tribe of 'Ād. He too invited his people to believe in Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah. As customary, his people belied him and insisted that he must first make a she-camel of a specified description come out from the rock of the mountain in front of them in order to have them believe that he was a true prophet of Allah.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام warned them: If Allah Ta'ālā shows you your custom-ordered miracles, and you still fail to believe, then, according to the customary practice of Allah, the punishment will come and destroy all of you. But, they remained obstinate and Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect power, made the miracle they demanded manifest before them. The rock of the mountain in front of them split asunder. Out from it came the she-camel bearing the features specified by them. Allah Ta'ālā ordered them not to harm that she-camel in any manner, otherwise the punishment will come upon them. But, they disobeyed this order as well, and killed the she-camel. Consequently, they were seized by Allah Ta'ālā, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and his companions were saved from the punishment, and the rest of those people were destroyed by a Sound which was severe and terrifying.

As part of this event, the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام have been reported to have said to him: قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هٰذَا (O Ṣāliḥ, we had hopes in you before this - 62). It means that, before he claimed to be a prophet and started telling them to shun idol-worship, they had great hopes in him. They thought he would rise to be a great reformer and leader of their people. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā nurtures and grooms his prophets from their childhood in a way that they become

models of good morals and habits. Whoever looks at them, loves and respects them. This is what happened in the case of the Last Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Before he declared that he has been sent as a prophet, the whole Arabia called him *al-amīn* (the trustworthy one) and took him to be true and righteous. It was only when he announced his prophet-hood and prohibited idol-worship that everyone turned hostile to him.

In verse 65, it was said: تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ: "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days [only]." That is, when these people killed the she-camel associated with the miracle in flagrant contravention of the Divine command, then, something serious happened. As warned earlier, 'lest a near punishment should seize you - 64', the punishment did come upon them in a manner that they were given a respite of three days and told that they all will be destroyed on the fourth day.

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, these three days were Thursday, Friday and Saturday. On Sunday, the punishment descended upon them: وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ (And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry – 67). This awesome Cry was that of the archangel, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl علیہ السلام which was far more terrorizing that the combined thunderbolts of worldly lightening could ever be, something human senses could not take. All hearts were rent apart by the horrific sound resulting in the mass destruction of those people.

From this verse we learn that the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ علیہ السلام were destroyed by a severe Sound, but what Sūrah al-A'rāf says about them is: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ (So, the earthquake seized them – 7:78,91) which, as obvious, tells us that the punishment visiting them was that of the earthquake. Commentator al-Qurṭubī has said that there is no contradiction here. It is possible that the earthquake came first and then they all were destroyed by the severe Sound. Allah knows best.

Verses 69 – 73

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبُشْرٰى قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ
فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنْ جَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيْذٍ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَلَمَّا رَآٰ اَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ
اِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ
اِلٰى قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَامْرَاَتُهٗ قَآئِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا

بِاِسْحٰقَ ۙ وَمِنْ وَّرَآءِ اِسْحٰقَ يَعْقُوْبَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَتْ يٰوَيْلَتٰٓى
ءَاَلِدُ وَاَنَا عَجُوْزٌ وَّهٰذَا بَعْلِىْ شَيْخًا ؕ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَىْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ
﴿٧٢﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَتَعْجَبِيْنَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ رَحْمَتُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكٰتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ
اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَمِيْدٌ مَّجِيْدٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

And Our messengers came to Ibrahim with the good news. They said, "Salam (peace)." He said, "Salam." Then he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf. [69]

So, when he noticed their hands not reaching for it, he found them strange and felt a bit of fright from them. They said, "Be not frightened. We have been sent to the people of Lut." [70] **And his wife was standing (nearby). She laughed, so, We gave her the good news about Ishaq, and about Ya'qub after Ishaq.** [71]

She said, "Woe is to me! Shall I give birth to a child while I am an old woman and this is my husband, an old man? This is something strange, indeed." [72] **They said, "Do you marvel at Allah's command? Allah's mercy and His blessings are upon you, the people of the house. Surely, He is praiseworthy, glorious."** [73]

Commentary

In these five verses, an event relating to Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام has been mentioned. Allah Ta'ala sent some angels to give him the good news of a birth in his family because Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام had no children from his wife, Sayyidah Sarah and he wished he had. But, they were much advanced in years. Obviously, there was no hope. Then, Allah Ta'ala sent the good news through the angels and that too of the nature that the new born would be a male child and even proposed the name of the child as Ishaq. Then, he was also told that he would live, have children and that the name of his son will be Ya'qub, and both of them would be the messenger and prophet of Allah. Since these angels had come in human form, Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام took them to be normal guests and lost no time in offering his hospitality. He placed a dish of roasted calf before them. But, they were really angels, free of eating and drinking. Therefore, despite the food being before them, they did not extend their hands towards it. When Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام noticed this, he was concerned. They did not look like

guests, may be they had come to create some problem for him. The angels scented his concern and disclosed their identity. They told him that they were angels of Allah Ta'ālā. There was no need for him to be frightened. They had been sent to give him the good news of a birth in his family, as well as to accomplish another mission, the mission of bringing Divine punishment on the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام. Sayyidah Sārah, the wife of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was listening to this conversation from behind a curtain. When she found out that they were angels, not human beings, there was no need for the otherwise essential *ḥijāb*. She laughed at the good news of the birth of a child in old age and said, 'shall I give birth to a child while I am an old woman and my husband, an old man?' The angels said as to why would she marvel at the command of Allah Ta'ālā who has everything within His power. Was it not that, as a member of the prophet's family, she has been witnessing that this was a family on which extraordinary Divine mercy and blessing descends all the time, which is mostly above and beyond the obvious chain of causes? So, what was there to wonder about? This was a gist of the event. Let us now go to details as they appear in the text of the verses cited above.

The first verse (69) tells us that these angels had come to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with some good news. The good news has been mentioned later in the third verse (71): فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا بِإِسْحٰقَ (so, We gave her the good news about Isḥāq).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās said that the three angels were Jibra'īl, Mikā'īl and Isrāfīl عليهم السلام. (Qurṭubī) They came in human form and greeted Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with '*salām*.' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام responded to their *salām* greeting and, taking them to be human, offered the usual hospitality.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is the first human being who introduced the custom of honoring guests by offering hospitality to them. (Qurṭubī) It was his routine that he would never eat alone. Instead, when came the time for meals, he would be looking out for a guest so that he could eat with him.

Al-Qurṭubī has reported from Isrā'īlī narratives that, on a certain day, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام started looking for a guest at the time for meals. The man he met was a stranger. When he sat down to eat, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said to him, 'say: I begin with the name of

Allah.' He said, 'I do not know Allah. Who and what is He?' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام asked him to leave the dining-spread on the floor. When he went out, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام came in and said, 'Allah Ta'ālā says: As for him, We gave sustenance to him throughout his life despite his disbelief and as for you, you were stingy about giving him even one morsel of food.' Hearing this, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام went after him and called him back. He said, 'unless you tell me the reason why you turned me out first and why are you asking me to come in again, I will not go with you.'

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام told him the episode, the episode itself became the reason for his becoming a believer. He said, 'the Lord who made you do this is very noble. I believe in Him.' Then he went in with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, behaved like a true believer and ate his food after having recited Bismillah first.

So, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, true to his habit of entertaining guests, welcomed angels who had come in human form. Naturally, to him they were human, and guests. The host did his most, lost no time and placed a roasted calf before them.

In the second verse (70), it was stated that the angels had, though, come in the human form and it was also possible that they could have been given human characteristics of eating and drinking at that particular time. But, the wiser choice for them was no other but that they should not eat so that the secret that they were angels comes out in the open. Therefore, their angelic characteristics were allowed to remain, even in their human form, because of which they did not extend their hands towards the food.

According to some reports, they had some arrows in their hands. They started poking the heads of their arrows into the roasted meat. When they acted in that manner, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام apprehended them to be his enemies, because, according to the social custom known to him, if a guest refused to eat, it was a sign of mischief to be made from his side. (Qurṭubī) His apprehension was quashed when the angels themselves disclosed their identity and said that they were angels, therefore, they do not eat. So, there was no danger for him to bother about.

Injunctions and Rules

Many injunctions and important rules of guidance regarding social living appear in the verses under study. Imām al-Qurṭubī has discussed them in detail in his Tafsīr.

The *Sunnah* of *Salām*

The words of verse 69 -- قَالُوا سَلٰمًا قَالَ سَلٰمٌ (They said, "*Salām.*" He said, "*Salām.*") – teach us that it is a Sunnah for Muslims that, when they meet each other, they should offer *Salām*. The guest coming in should say it first while others should respond.

That people say some words to greet each other when they meet is a custom found in all communities. But, the teaching of Islām is unique in this matter for the *masnūn* word of *salām* is السلام عليكم : As-*Salāmu 'Alaikum*. It carries the name of Allah with it. So it is both a Dhikr of Allah, and a prayer for peace and protection from Him – in addition to being a guarantee of the protection of life, property and honor from one's own side. (When we equate *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum* with 'peace on you' we go by the anatomy and leave the spirit that is essential to it – **tr.**)

At this place in the Qur'ān, it has been said that the angels said 'سلاما' (*salām*) and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام responded with 'سلام' (*salām*). Obviously, here it was not considered necessary to mention *salām* in its complete form – as customary in usage when it is said that a person said *salām* to someone where it is presupposed that he said the whole greeting of *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum*. Similarly, at this place, *salām* stands for the full *masnūn* greeting which has been taught to his community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed, that is, saying: السلام عليكم (*As-Salāmu 'Alaikum*) at the beginning of *salām*, and:وعليكم السلام ورحمة الله (*wa 'alaikumu-s-salām*, or *wa 'alaikumu-s-salāmu wa raḥmatu-l-lāh* to be more generous) while responding to the *salām*.

Some Rules for Guests and Hosts

It has been said in the last sentence of verse 69: فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنْ جَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيْذٍ (Then he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf).

This tells us a few things:

1. It is a part of the etiquette of hospitality that the host should, soon after the arrival of the guest, bring out something to eat, or drink, something he has on hand and which could be offered quickly

and conveniently. Then, if the host is a man of means, he can arrange for additional hospitality later. (Qurṭubī)

2. A host should not worry about making too many formal arrangements for a guest. Anything good available easily is good enough. Let him put it before the guest. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام had some domestic animals at home. Therefore, he slaughtered a calf, had it roasted quickly and offered it to his guests. (Qurṭubī)

3. Receiving guests and offering hospitality to them is a part of the essential etiquette of Islam, in fact, a hallmark of high morals. This is the blessed habit of prophets and the righteous. Is it necessary (*wājib*) to entertain guests? Or, is it not? 'Ulamā' have difference of opinion in this matter. According to the majority of them, it is a *sunnah*, and desirable, but not *wājib* (necessary, obligatory). Some of them say that it is *wājib* on village people that they should offer hospitality to a person who stays in their village because a stranger has no arrangement for his meals there. Since such arrangements are possible through a hotel in cities, therefore, it is not *wājib* on those who live in cities. Al-Qurṭubī has reported all these different views in his Tafsīr.

In verse 70, it was said: فَلَمَّا رَاٰۤ اَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ اِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ (So, when he noticed their hands not reaching for it, he found them strange and felt a bit of fright from them).

From here we learn that there are rules of etiquette for guests as well. A guest should accept whatever is offered. Let him partake from it a little bit to please the host, even if not willing to eat because of unfavorable taste or apprehended harm.

This very sentence also tells us that the host should not consider himself absolved after having placed the food before the guest. Instead, he should be benignly watching whether or not the guest is partaking of the food, as was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام when he noticed that the angels were not eating.

But, this watching has to be discreet, not something like staring at the guest while he is eating. A casual look is enough, because looking at the morsels of food being eaten by the guest is contrary to the etiquette of entertainment and certainly very humiliating for the invited guest. This is illustrated by an incident relating to Khalīfah Hishām ibn 'Abd ul-Mālik. On a certain day, the Khalīfah was sharing his food-

spread with a rustic Arab. The morsel of food being eaten by the Arab had a strand of hair in it. When Khalīfah Hishām noticed it, he told the Arab about it. The Arab instantly rose in a huff saying, 'we never eat with a person who watches our morsels.'

Al-Ṭabarī reports at this place: When the angels abstained from eating the first time, they had said that they do not eat free meals. If they were to accept payment for it, they would. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said, 'Yes, there is a price for it that you can pay. The price is: Say 'with the name of Allah' when you begin, and praise Him when you finish.' Hearing this, the archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام told his companions, 'That Allah Ta'ālā calls him His friend is correct. He deserves it.'

This tells us that saying: بسم الله (*bismillah*: With the name of Allah) when beginning to eat, and saying: الحمدلله (*alhamdulillāh*: Praise belongs to Allah) at the end of it is Sunnah.

Verses 74 – 83

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَآءَتْهُ الْبُشْرٰى يُجَادِلُنَا فِيْ
قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَحَلِيْمٌ اَوَّاهٌ مُّنِيْبٌ ﴿٧٥﴾ يٰۤاِبْرٰهِيْمُ
اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّهٗ قَدْ جَآءَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۚ وَاِنَّهُمْ اٰتِيْهِمْ عَذَابٌ
غَيْرُ مَرْدُوْدٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوْطًا سِيْٓءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ
بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَّقَالَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيْبٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَجَآءَهٗ قَوْمُهٗ يُهْرَعُوْنَ
اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ
بَنَاتِيْ هُنَّ اَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْزُوْنِ فِيْ ضَيْفِيْ ؕ
اَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيْدٌ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالُوْا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِيْ
بَنٰتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ ۚ وَاِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيْدُ ﴿٧٩﴾ قَالَ لَوْ اَنَّ لِيْ بِكُمْ
قُوَّةً اَوْ اٰوِيْٓ اِلٰى رُكْنٍ شَدِيْدٍ ﴿٨٠﴾ قَالُوْا يٰلُوْطُ اِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ
لَنْ يَّصِلُوْٓا اِلَيْكَ فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ
مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَكَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مُصِيْبُهَا مَاۤ اَصَابَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ
الصُّبْحُ ؕ اَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيْبٍ ﴿٨١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا

عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ مَّنضُودٍ
﴿٨٢﴾ مُّسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ ﴿٨٣﴾

So, when fear left Ibrāhīm and the happy news came to him, he started pleading before Us for the people of Lūṭ. [74] **Surely, Ibrāhīm is forbearing, very penitent, ever-turning to Allah.** [75]

O Ibrāhīm! Leave it, in fact, the command of your Lord has come, and there has to come upon them a punishment, not to be turned back. [76]

And when Our emissaries (angels) came to Lūṭ, he felt uneasy and was strained in his heart on account of them, and said, "This is a very hard day." [77]

And his people came to him, rushing upon him. And already they used to commit evil deeds. He said, "These are my daughters. They are far more clean for you. So, fear Allah and do not disgrace me in respect of my guests. Is there not a single right man among you." [78]

They said, "You know that we have no claim on your daughters, and you know well what we want." [79]

He said, "O that I had power over you or might have some strong support for refuge." [80]

They (the angels) said, "O Lūṭ, we are emissaries of your Lord. They shall never reach you. So, move with your family in a part of night, and none of you shall turn to look back; except your woman. There has to befall her whatever befalls them. Their deadline is the morning. Is it not that the morning is near?" [81]

So, when Our command came, We turned its highest into the lowest, and We rained on it stones of hard clay, one over another [82] **marked, with your Lord. And it is not far from the transgressors.** [83]

Commentary

Sūrah Hūd carries an account of different kinds of Divine punishments sent over past peoples because of their antagonism to prophets of the time. Described in the verses cited above is the moral condition of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and the severe punishment given to them.

Besides being disbelievers, the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were involved in the practice of such abject evil and immodesty as was not found in the world before them, something even wild animals hate. That a man would pollute his honor and dignity with another man is a curse the fallout from which is far more injurious than common fornication. Therefore, the harsh punishment that descended on these people had never hit known practitioners of common acts of immodesty.

The event relating to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام as it appears in the cited verses tells that Allah Ta'ālā sent some angels, including Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام, to execute the punishment against these people. They first went to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in Palestine, the account of which has appeared in previous verses. After that, they came to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام whose abode was located at a distance of ten or twelve miles from there.

Certainly great is the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā. When He seizes a people in punishment, the punishment that he makes descend upon them is chosen to be congruous to their misdeed. On this occasion too, these angels of Allah were sent in the form of handsome young men. When they reached the home of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, he too took them to be visiting guests for they had come in human form. He found himself in a fix. If he backed out from entertaining guests, it would be against his dignity as a prophet. If he took them in as his guests, then, he knew how evil and dirty his people were. The danger was that they might storm his home and hurt the guests while he failed to defend them. So, in his heart, he said, 'this is a very hard day.'

Allah Ta'ālā has, in His great design, made this world of ours an open gallery of lessons full of the countless exhibits of His perfect power and eloquent wisdom. He made His friend Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام come out as a prophet from the home of Āzar, the idol-worshipper. In the home of the highly revered prophet, Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, there was that wife of his who worked in league with disbelievers and opposed her prophet husband. When these honored guests in the form of handsome young men came to stay at the home of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, his wife passed on the information to perverted hoods from these people telling them about the kind of guests they had in their home on that day. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Things turned out as Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام had first apprehended.

This finds mention in the second verse (78): وَ جَآءَهٗ قَوۡمُهٗ يُهۡرَعُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِ (And his people came to him, rushing upon him) – and they were already used to committing evil deeds.

It has been hinted here that such was the curse of their evil deed that they had lost all sense of modesty and propriety, so much so that they did not hesitate to storm even the home of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام for a purpose that sinister.

When Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام realized that it was difficult to protect his guests, he tried to divert the attention of his people from their evil advances by telling them that he would give his daughters in marriage to their chiefs, if they were to stop their evil-mongering. The marriage of a believing girl with a disbelieving man was permissible at that time. The practice had continued up to the early period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, therefore, he had given two of his daughters in marriage to 'Utbah ibn Abī Lahab and Abu al-'Āṣ ibn al-Rabī', though both of them were disbelievers. Later came the verses that prohibited the marriage of Muslim women with disbelieving men as *ḥarām*. (Qurṭubī)

According to some commentators, 'my daughters' at this place means the daughters of the whole community because every prophet is like a father to his people and the whole community is his spiritual progeny. It is supported by the noble verse: اَلنَّبِيُّ اَوۡلٰى بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجُهٗۤ اُمَّهٰتُهُمۡ (The Prophet comes first with the believers against their own selves and his wives are (like) their mothers – 33:6). This should be seen with the additional words: وَهُوَ اَبٌ لَّهُمۡ (and he is [like] a father for them) as they appear in the rendition (*Qirā'ah*) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been identified as a father to the entire Muslim Ummah. According to this Tafsīr, the statement of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام would mean, 'you leave this evil habit of yours, behave like gentlemen, marry girls from your people and have them as your wives.'

After that, it was to warn them against Divine punishment that Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام said: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (So, fear Allah). Then he pleaded with them: وَلَا تُخۡزُوۡنِ فِيۡ ضَيۡفِيۡ (do not disgrace me in respect of my guests) and then wondered: اَلَيۡسَ مِنۡكُمۡ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيۡدٌ (Is there not a single right man among you?), someone who would listen to his plaint.

But, there was no trace of gentility or even humanness left in any of them. So, in acid wickedness, they all responded: لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنٰتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيْدُ (You know that we have no claim on your daughters, and you know well what we want.'

Totally exasperated, what Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام could say at that time was: لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَى رُكْنٍ شَدِيْدٍ that is, 'only if I had enough strength in me to stand against this onslaught by my people, or that I had the backing of some strong group who would have helped me get rid of these oppressors.'

Seeing this anxiety of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, the angels disclosed their identity and said, 'do not worry. Your group is very strong and very powerful. We are angels of Allah. They cannot touch us. We have come to execute the punishment for them.'

It appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about it, 'may Allah Ta'ālā have mercy on Lūṭ عليه السلام. He was compelled to seek the protection of some strong group.' And the report in Tirmidhī carries another sentence with it, 'after Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, Allah Ta'ālā sent no prophet whose clan or tribe was not his supporter.' (Qurṭubī) This was true in the case of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The disbelieving Quraysh did everything they could against him, but his entire clan supported him – though, they did not agree with him religion-wise. This was the reason why Banū Hāshim as a whole sided with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the boycott imposed by the Quraysh disbelievers whereby they had cut off essential supplies to him.

During this episode, as reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه , when the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام mobbed his home, he had closed the entrance door. The conversation with these wicked people was going on from behind it. The angels too were inside. The mob was threatening to jump the walls, barge in and break the door. Thereupon, came these words on the lips of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. When the angels saw this anxiety of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, they disclosed their real identity and asked him to open the door. It was time that they took over and gave the miscreants a foretaste of the Divine punishment. When the door was opened, archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام pointed his 'Feather' towards their eyes. They turned blind and started running.

At that time, the angels under Divine command said to Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام: فَاَسۡرِ بِاَهۡلِكَ بِقِطۡعٍ مِّنَ الَّيۡلِ (So, move with your family in a part of night). And asked him to instruct everyone in his family not to turn and look back with the exception of his wife because she was going to be hit by the same punishment that was to fall on his people.

This could also mean that he was not to take his wife along with him. And it could also mean that, being his wife, she was to go along as part of his family, but she would not obey the instruction of not looking back he would give to his family. According to some reports, this is what happened. This wife started off with others, but when she heard the big bang of the punishment given to her people, she looked back and felt sorry at their destruction. At that moment there came a splintered rock and finished her off like others. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

The angels had also told Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام that: اِنَّ مَوۡعِدَهُمُ الصُّبۡحُ (The deadline [of the punishment] is the morning). He said that he wished the punishment would come sooner. Thereupon, the angels said: اَلَيۡسَ الصُّبۡحُ بِقَرِيۡبٍ (Is it not that the morning is near?)

After that, the Qur'ān portrays the occurrence of the punishment by saying: So, when Our command came, We turned whatever there was in their habitat upside down raining such stones over it as had the names of everyone there marked on it.

Reports say that these habitations were composed of four major towns where those people lived. These very habitations have been named as *'al-mu'tafikāt'* (the towns overturned) elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān (9:70, 69:9). When the Divine command came, the archangel Jibra'īl *al-Amīn* علیه السلام dissected the base of the land mass holding all those towns on top of it with his wing, raised all of it upwards in a way that everything stayed where it was, even water in a water vessel. It was in the backdrop of human, animal and canine voices coming from the sky that he heaved all these habitations straight up towards the sky and, then, threw the whole thing back upside down – as appropriate to and as called for by the evil they indulged in.

At the end of the verse (83), after having mentioned the actual punishment that hit the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام, it was to warn the contemporary peoples of the world that it was said: وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ بِبَعِيۡدٍ (And it is not far from the transgressors). It means that people who

insist upon indulging in this shameful act should not consider themselves very far from this punishment. It can come even today. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'even in my Ummah, some people will do what the people of Lūṭ علیہ السلام used to do. When this starts happening, then wait, for they too would be subjected to the same punishment that was inflicted on the people of Lūṭ علیہ السلام.'

Verses 84 – 95

وَاِلٰى مَدْيَنَ اَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًاؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ
اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗؕ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ اِنِّیْۤ اَرٰىكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ
وَّاِنِّیْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيْطٍ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ اَوْفُوا
الْمِكْيَالَ وَ الْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا
تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ بَقِيَّتُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوْا يٰشُعَيْبُ
اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَاۤ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِیْۤ
اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُاؕ اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ ﴿٨٧﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ
اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّیْ وَرَزَقَنِیْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًاؕ
وَمَاۤ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَاۤ اَنْهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُؕ اِنْ اُرِيْدُ اِلَّا
الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُؕ وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِیْۤ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ
وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِیْۤ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ
مِّثْلُ مَاۤ اَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍؕ وَمَا قَوْمُ
لُوْطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْۤا اِلَيْهِؕ اِنَّ
رَبِّیْ رَحِيْمٌ وَّدُوْدٌ ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوْا يٰشُعَيْبُ مَا نَفْقَهُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَقُوْلُ
وَاِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْنَا ضَعِيْفًاۚ وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنٰكَ ۫ وَمَاۤ اَنْتَ
عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيْزٍ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَهْطِیْۤ اَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِؕ وَ
اتَّخَذْتُمُوْهُ وَرَآءَكُمْ ظِهْرِيًّاؕ اِنَّ رَبِّیْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿٩٢﴾

وَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّىْ عَامِلٌ ۭ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ
مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ۭ وَارْتَقِبُوْٓا اِنِّىْ
مَعَكُمْ رَقِيْبٌ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا ۚ وَ اَخَذَتِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ
فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِىْ دِيَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ۭ اَلَا
بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِدَتْ ثَمُوْدُ ﴿۹۵﴾

And to Madyan (We sent) their brother, Shu'aib. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. And do not lessen the measure and the weight. I see you quite well off, and I fear for you the punishment of an encircling day. [84]

And O my people, perfect the measure and the balance with justice and do not make the people short of their things, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder. [85]

Whatever is left (with you) by Allah is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a watchman over you. [86]

They said, "O Shu'aib, does your *ṣalāh* (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or give up our free-will in (spending) our wealth? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance." [87] **He said, "O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, (should I still leave you unguided?) And I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you. I want nothing but to set things right as far as I can. And my ability to do things comes from none but Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust and to Him alone I turn in humbleness.** [88] **O my people, let not your hostility towards me cause you to suffer what was suffered by the people of Nūḥ, or the people of Hūd, or the people of Ṣāliḥ. And the people of Lūṭ are not far from you.** [89] **And seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn towards Him in repentance. Surely, my Lord is very merciful, most loving."** [90]

They said, "O Shu'aib, we do not understand most of

what you say, and, in fact, we see you weak among us. But for your clan, we would have stoned you. And to us, you are not a man of respect." [91]

He said, "O my people, is my clan more respectable to you than Allah? And you have taken Him as something thrown behind your backs. Surely, my Lord encompasses all that you do. [92] **And O my people, do what you can, I am to do (what I can). Soon you will know the one whom the punishment visits humiliating him, and the one who is false. And wait. I am, with you, waiting."** [93]

And when Our command came, We saved Shu'aib and those who believed along with him, out of mercy from Us, and those who transgressed were caught by the Cry, and they were found (dead) in the homes, fallen on their knees, [94] **as though they never lived there. Lo! Curse be upon Madyan, like Thamūd were cursed.** [95]

Commentary

An account of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his people appears in the verses cited above. Besides being *kāfirs* and *mushriks*, his people used to give less in weights and measures. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام carried his call to them, told them not to give less in weights and measures, and warned them of Divine punishment if they persisted with this way of life. But, they did persist with their denial and contumacy and, as a consequence, all those people were destroyed through a severe punishment, details of which appear as follows.

In the first verse (84), it was said: وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا (And to Madyan [We sent] their brother, Shu'aib عليه السلام).

Madyan was actually the name of a town settled by Madyan ibn Ibrāhīm. Its present location has been given as 'Ma'ān' in Jordan. The people of this town are also called Madyan. Therefore, by calling Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام a 'brother of Madyan,' it was hinted that Allah Ta'ālā sent His messenger to those people from among them so that they feel familiar and find it easier to accept his teachings.

Then, it was said:

قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ، وَلَا تَنقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ

O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him.

And do not lessen the measure and the weight.

Here, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has invited his people to believe in the Oneness of Allah (Tauḥīd) because they were Mushriks, those who associated partners in the divinity of Allah. They worshipped trees. That has been pointed to through the use of the word: الايكه (*al-'aikah*: trees) in the Holy Qur'ān and it is in this respect that the people of Madyan have also been given the sobriquet of أَصْحٰبُ الْأَيْكَة (*ashabu al--aikah*: the people of *aikah* – 15:78, 26:176, 38:13, 50:14). Along with this *kufr* and *shirk*, they were also involved in the grave sin of cheating in commercial transactions when they would weigh short and give less in measure and thus deprive people of what was to come to them as their right. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told them not to do that.

Special Note

Here, it is useful to keep in mind that *kufr* and *shirk* are the roots of all sins. People soaked in these are usually the first to be invited to believe. Faith comes before consideration could be given to matters like social transactions and individual deeds. Whether they have deliverance in the present world or would deserve punishment are things that too are decided on the basis of this faith or denial. All events related to past prophets and their peoples mentioned in the Qur'ān bear witness to this mode of action – with the exception of two communities. Punishment came upon them because of their disbelief as well as due to their evil deeds. The people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were one of them upon whom, as mentioned earlier, their entire habitation was overturned. It has been stated that their evil practice was the reason for it. The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام were the other one. They were punished because of their *kufr* and *shirk* as well as because of their habit of weighing less and measuring short.

This tells us that both these things are most hated and grave, more than any other sin. Obviously, the reason is that they bring serious loss upon the entire human race leaving the world populated by it in a disorder of ominous proportions.

Turning to the verses cited above, we see that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has used his prophetic compassion to make his people stop their evil practice of giving short measure and less weight. The words he has used to say that are eloquent: إِنِّيْٓ أَرٰىكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَّإِنِّيْٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيْطٍ (I see you quite well off, and I fear for you the punishment of an encir-

cling day – 84). It means that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام found them living comfortably. There were not poor, hungry and financially straitened which could be one of the reasons why they had to take recourse to such a cursed practice. Now that they were already blessed by Allah Ta'ālā, it required that they should not subject His creation to injustice. Not leaving it at that, they were also told that, in the event they did not listen to their prophet and did not stop this evil practice, he apprehended that Divine punishment might encircle them. This punishment could mean the punishment of the Hereafter, and the punishment of the present world too. Then, the punishments due to come in this world may be of different kinds. The lowest punishment could be that they might lose the prosperity they had, or they may fall victims to famines and price hikes, as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

> 'When a people start lessening weights and measures, Allah Ta'ālā makes them suffer from the punishment of famine and price hikes.'

Obviously, the very prohibition of weighing and measuring short makes weighing and measuring in full necessary. But, to emphasize it further, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said:

وَيٰقَوْمِ اَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ

> And O my people, perfect the measure and the balance with justice and do not make the people short of their things, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder – 85.

Then, affectionately, he explained to them:

بَقِيَّتُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ، وَمَآ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ

> Whatever is left [with you] by Allah is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a watchman over you – 86.

It means if they were not to listen to him, let them remember that he was not responsible for the eventuality that they may be seized by some punishment.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام that he was an orator among prophets. His eloquence was exceptional. He went to its farthest limits in order to make his people understand his message and take to the right path. But, even after having listened

to him, the response of his people was different from that given by ignorant diehards to their reformers. They threw taunts at him, made fun of him, and said:

اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا ۗ اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ.

> O Shu'aib عليه السلام, does your *ṣalāh* (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or that we give up doing with our wealth whatever we wish? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance – 87.

The *ṣalāh* (prayer) of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was well known among his people as he was constantly devoted to it. Therefore, they referred to it tauntingly in the sense that (God forbid) his *ṣalāh* taught him to say all those 'wild' things. From what they said we learn that they too thought that religion is restricted to acts of worship, and that it had nothing to do with material dealings. Let everyone earn and spend one's wealth at will. Placing any restriction on that is no job of religion – as many people, even in this time of ours, generally believe, in total ignorance of the real fact.

What Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had said to his people was good counsel based on earnest fellow feeling. But, his people responded to him with a sarcasm that was biting. However, they had done that to a blessed prophet of Sayyidnā Shu'aib's class. He heard their caustic comments, yet turned to them with the same empathy and once again tried to make them see the truth. He said: يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَرَزَقَنِيْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا (O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, [should I still leave you unguided?]) Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was telling his people that he had been blessed by his Lord in that He gave him good provision for his material life and in that He also gave him the light of revelation and spiritual insight. Now, with these wonderful assets in his hands, how could he ever think of becoming like them, willingly embracing error and injustice, and thus failing to bring the truth home to them?

After that, he said: وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَآ اَنْهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ (and I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you). This tells us that the way a preacher of religion conducts his life has a major role in what he

preaches. What a preacher does not himself practice produces no effect on others.

Then, he said: إِنْ أُرِيْدُ اِلَّا الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ (I want to do nothing but to set things right as far as I can). And since, this effort too was not by his personal choice and volition, he further said: وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِيْٓ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ، عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ (And my ability to do things comes from none but Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust, and to Him alone I turn in humbleness).

After having given this good counsel to them, he warned them of the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā. He said:

وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِيْٓ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ مِّثْلُ مَآ اَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍ، وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ

And O my people, let not your hostility towards me cause you to suffer what was suffered by the people of Nūḥ, or the people of Hūd, or the people of Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام). And the people of Lūṭ (عليه السلام) are not far from you.

The sense of the last sentence is that the overturned habitations of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were close to Madyan where they were. Then, in terms of time, the punishment that came upon them was very close. From this they could learn their lesson and leave their obstinacy.

Hearing this, his people were enraged. They said that had it not been for the support he had from his clan, they would have stoned him to death. Despite this threat, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, true to his mettle as a prophet, did not hesitate to tell them that they feared his clan all right, but would have no fear of Allah who holds everything in His power.

Finally, when his people did not listen to anything said to them, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told them that they could now wait for the punishment. After that, Allah Ta'ālā took out Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and those who had believed in him, as is the Divine practice, from that habitation and the rest of them were destroyed instantly at the harsh Cry of Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام.

Injunctions and Rulings:

Rules about Lessening of Weights and Measures

One of the reasons why punishment fell on the people of Sayyidnā

Shu'aib عليه السلام was their practice of weighing and measuring less than due – called *tatfif*. The Holy Qur'ān has described the severe punishment for those who do that in Sūrah al-Muṭaffifin which opens with the verse: وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِيْنَ (Woe to those who give less – 83:1). There is a consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah that doing so is strictly *ḥarām* (unlawful). Quoting a saying of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه, Imām Mālik has said in Mu'aṭṭā' that weighing and measuring less essentially means that someone does not fulfill the right of another person due on him, fully and duly. In fact, makes it less, whether it happens to be something given by weight, or measure, or something of another kind. If an employee falls short in performing his or her assigned duty, or an office worker, or a laborer cuts his working hours short, or fails to fulfill his job assignment as due, then, they all will be counted in this category. Anyone who does not perform his or her Ṣalāh with due consideration of everything obligatory and *masnūn* in it has also committed the crime of this '*tatfif*.' May Allah keep all of us protected from it!

Ruling

It appears in Tafsir al-Qurṭubī that the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام would save gold and silver by trimming the edges of gold and silver coins, like *dinār* and *dirham*, circulating in the country as official currency, and which they would channel back into circulation at par value. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام prohibited them from doing so.

In Ḥadīth as well, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has declared the chipping of the coins of an Islamic state to be *ḥarām* (unlawful). Tafsir authority, Zayd ibn Aslam has said exactly this while explaining the verse of the Qur'ān: تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُّفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ (nine family heads spreading corruption in the land and not correcting [their ways] – 27:48). He says that these people of the city mentioned in the verse used to chip off gold and silver from *dinār* and *dirham* coins and ran a profitable business of their own through this source – something the Qur'ān calls a great corruption.

During the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, someone was arrested while he was cutting a *dirham* coin. He was awarded a punishment of lashes and was paraded around head shaved. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 96 – 101

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٩٦﴾ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ
مَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَمَآ اَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيْدٍ ﴿٩٧﴾
يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَاَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُوْدُ
﴿٩٨﴾ وَاُتْبِعُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهٖ لَعْنَةً وَّيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ بِئْسَ الرِّفْدُ الْمَرْفُوْدُ
﴿٩٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَاۗءِ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّهٗ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَاۗىِٕمٌ وَّحَصِيْدٌ
﴿١٠٠﴾ وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَمَآ اَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ
اٰلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِيْ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَّمَّا جَاۗءَ اَمْرُ
رَبِّكَ ۭ وَمَا زَادُوْهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيْبٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

And We sent Mūsā with Our signs, and with clear proof, [96] to Pharaoh and his group. So, they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh is not right. [97] He will lead his people on the Day of Judgement, and make them descend into the Fire. And it is the evil descending place. [98] And the curse was made to pursue them here and on the Day of Judgement. It is the evil reward to be offered. [99]

That is a part of stories of the towns that We narrate to you. Some of them are standing, and (some) harvested. [100]

And We have not wronged them; rather, they have wronged themselves. So, their gods whom they used to invoke beside Allah did not come to their help in any thing, when came the command of your Lord, and they gave them nothing more than destruction. [101]

Verses 102 – 111

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَخْذُ رَبِّكَ اِذَآ اَخَذَ الْقُرٰى وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ۭ اِنَّ اَخْذَهٗٓ اَلِيْمٌ
شَدِيْدٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ
يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوْعٌ ۙ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَذٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُوْدٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَا
نُؤَخِّرُهٗٓ اِلَّا لِاَجَلٍ مَّعْدُوْدٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ يَوْمَ يَاْتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا

بِإِذْنِهٖ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَّسَعِيْدٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ شَقُوْا فَفِى
النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا زَفِيْرٌ وَّ شَهِيْقٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَادَامَتِ
السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ رَبُّكَ ۗ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيْدُ
﴿١٠٧﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ سُعِدُوْا فَفِى الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَادَامَتِ
السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ رَبُّكَ ۗ عَطَآءً غَيْرَ مَجْذُوْذٍ
﴿١٠٨﴾ فَلَاتَكُ فِىْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ۗ مَايَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا
يَعْبُدُ اٰبَاؤُهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَاِنَّا لَمُوَفُّوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنْقُوْصٍ
﴿١٠٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ۗ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ
سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِىَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِىْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ
﴿١١٠﴾ وَاِنَّ كُلًّا لَّمَّا لَيُوَفِّيَنَّهُمْ رَبُّكَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ۗ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١١١﴾

And such is the seizing of your Lord when He seizes the (people of) towns while they are transgressing. Indeed, His seizing is painful, severe. [102]

In this there is a sign for the one who fears the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a day when all the people shall be gathered together, and that is a day having everyone present. [103] **And We do not defer it but for a limited term,** [104] **the day it comes no one shall speak except by His leave. So, some of them are wretched and (some) blessed.** [105]

As for those who are wretched, they shall be in the Fire. For them there is (nothing but) crying and howling. [106] **They shall remain there for ever, as long as the heavens and the earth remain, unless your Lord wills (otherwise). Surely, your Lord does what He intends.** [107]

As for those who are blessed, they shall be in Paradise living there forever, as long as the heavens and the earth remain, unless your Lord wills (otherwise) an award never to be cut off. [108]

So, be not in doubt about what they worship. They do not worship except in the way their fathers used to worship earlier. And surely, We are going to pay them their full share, non-curtailed. [109]

And We gave Mūsā the Book, then it was disputed about. But, for a word from your Lord that had already come, the matter would have been decided between them. And surely, they are in confounding doubt about it. [110]

And to all of them, your Lord shall pay for their deeds in full. Surely, He is aware of all that they do. [111]

Verses 112 - 113

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا ۭ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ ۙ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾

So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – you, and those who have repented with you, and do not cross the limits. Surely, He is watchful of what you do. [112]

And do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should catch you, and you shall have no supporters other than Allah, then you shall not be helped. [113]

Commentary

Events relating to past prophets and their peoples, from Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام to Sayyidnā Mūsā, have been mentioned in Sūrah Hūd in a fair enough order and detail with many wise counsels, injunctions and directives. At the end of the description of these events, it is by addressing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that his entire community has been exhorted to draw their essential lessons from them. It was said: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَاۗءِ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّهٗ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَاۗىِٕمٌ وَّحَصِيْدٌ (That is a part of the stories of the towns that We narrate to you. Some of them are standing, and (some) harvested – 100). It means that some of the habitations that were visited by Divine punishment still have their ruins standing while some others have been erased like harvested fields with no signs of what

was there in the past.

After that it was said that Allah did not wrong them, rather, they had wronged themselves (101,102) in that they abandoned their creator and sustainer and took to idols and other things as their gods. Finally, when the Divine punishment came, their self-made gods did not come to their rescue in any way. The lesson to learn was that the grip of Allah is painful and severe. When He seizes heedless wrongdoers doing what they do, this is what happens invariably.

Then, to turn them round to the concern of the Hereafter, it was said (103-105) that these events carry in them great lessons and signs for those who fear the punishment of the Hereafter, a day when all human beings will be gathered together, with everyone present there. That will be a day of such awe that no one present there shall dare utter a word without Divine permission.

Six verses later, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was addressed again by saying:

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ

> So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – you, and those who have repented [from *kufr* and are] with you, and do not cross the limits. Surely, He is watchful of what you do – 112.

The Sense of *Istiqāmah* (Standing Firm):

Some related problems and their solutions

Istiqāmah means to stand straight without the least tilt one way or the other (hence expressed in English as straightforwardness, straightness, directness, rectitude etc.) As obvious, it is not something easy to do. If we were dealing with a vertical object cast in iron, rock or some other material, our expert engineers could make it stand straight at the very outset in a way that it stands on perfect right angles from all sides without the least tilt on any side. But, having a moving object stand straight at all times and under all conditions in this perfect state is certainly something extremely difficult. For discerning people, this is no secret.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and all Muslims have been commanded in this verse that they should stand firm under all conditions in everything they do. *Istiqāmah* is a small word but in its sense it ex-

tends to many areas of application in a very unusual manner. The very meaning of this act of standing firm is that one has to move straightforwardly, as commanded by Allah, on the straight path identified by Him, remaining within the limits set by Him. This has to be in all matters of beliefs, acts of worship, personal and collective transactions, morals, social dealings, economic pursuits inclusive of all channels of income and expenditure. In the event, there occurs the slightest tilt, or decrease or increase, or shortcoming or excess, under any condition, and in any deed, in any of these areas of activity, Istiqāmah becomes the first casualty.

Errors in thinking and practice that show up around us are an outcome of this deviation from the command to stand firm. When people do not stand firm in beliefs (*'aqā'id*), they start with self-invented practices in religion (*bid'āt*) and end up into the extremes of *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (associating others with Allah). The principles of Allah's Oneness (*Tauḥīd*) and His Being (*Dhāt*) and Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) conveyed to us by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are moderate and sound. People who commit any act of excess and deficiency or addition and deletion in them – even if they may be doing so with good intentions on their part – shall be considered astray and in error. As for those who belittle and lessen the limits set for having regard and love for the blessed prophets, everyone knows that they are astray and audacious. Similarly, those who commit the excess of assigning a prophet proprietary rights in Divine attributes and powers also cross those limits and fall into an error of this nature. The Jews and the Christians lost themselves into this error. The methods of worshipping Allah and seeking nearness to Him determined by the Glorious Qur'ān, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are great benchmarks. Any slicing, undercutting or shortcoming in these drags one down from the desired level of standing firm and, similarly, any addition to these from one's own side ruins one's chances of standing firm by his indulgence in self-innovated ways in established religion. Unfortunately, such a person honestly thinks that he is pleasing Allah while, in fact, it is precisely the very cause of His displeasure. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has very emphatically prohibited his community from indulging in self-innovated ways in established religion (*bid'āt* and *muḥdathāt*) and has declared that to be acute error and straying. Therefore, before one does something as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) for the pleasure of

Allah and His Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم, he must first investigate and ensure fully as to the nature of his action. He must find out whether or not what he is going to do stands proved from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Ṣaḥābah in the same state and form. If it does not, let him not waste his good time and energy in this pursuit.

Similarly, there are matters relating to transactions, morals and social dealings. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has followed the principles given by the Qur'ān in his practical teachings through which he has marked out a moderate and sound way of conducting ourselves in our lives. It has provided the Muslims with a moderate and straight course of action in the matters of friendship, enmity, softness and strictness, anger and forbearance, miserliness and generosity, economic activity and monasticism, trust in Allah and use of possible material means, finding what is necessary and relying on the Prime Mover of all causes. These are different things, yet they have been fused into one, a straight path of moderation, and a virtual gift to Muslims not to be found elsewhere in the whole world. So, the key is to act in accordance with these teachings and become perfect human beings. When people do not stand firm and tilt one way or the other, the society goes bad inevitably.

In short, the concept of standing firm is comprehensive. It covers all parts and pillars of religion. When acted upon correctly, it becomes its eloquent demonstration.

Sufyān ibn 'Abdullāh Thaqafī asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'please tell me something so comprehensive about Islām that I need not ask anyone anything after you.' He said, 'قُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِاللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَقِمْ : Say: I believe in Allah. Then, stand firm on it.' (Reported by Muslim, as quoted by al-Qurṭubī)

'Uthmān ibn 'Abdullāh al-Azdī said that once he went to the famous Ṣaḥābī and the commentator, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and requested him for some words of advice. He said, 'عَلَيْكَ بِتَقْوَى اللّٰهِ وَالْاِسْتِقَامَةِ اِتَّبِعْ وَلَا تَبْتَدِعْ' (Reported by al-Dārimī in his Musnad, as quoted by al-Qurṭubī). It means that he should make the fear of Allah essential for him, and also that he should stand firm in his faith. The method of doing so was to follow the percepts of the Sharī'ah in all religious matters and not to invent and introduce any *bid'ah* in it from his own side.

Out of the many tough jobs handled in this world, the toughest is nothing but to stand firm. Therefore, Ṣufī authorities have said that standing firm is a station much superior to the working of miracles (*karāmah*). It means that a person who is holding on firmly to the assignments of his religion is a saint in his own right – even though, no miracle has issued forth from him throughout his life.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said that no verse revealed to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in the entire Qur'ān was harder and more trying than this (112). And he said that once the Companions noticing some gray strands of hair in his blessed beard sorrowfully remarked, 'old age is approaching you much earlier.' Thereupon, he said, 'Sūrah Hūd has made me old.' The events of severe punishments that came upon past communities as described in Sūrah Hūd could also be the reason for it, but Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said that this verse alone is its reason.

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī reports from Abū 'Alī Sirriy that he, on seeing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in a dream asked him, 'have you said something like "Sūrah Hūd has made me old"?' He said, 'yes.' Abū 'Alī asked again, 'had the subject of punishments that came upon the peoples of the past prophets made you old?' He said, 'no, in fact, this saying of Allah Ta'ālā did: فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ (So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – 112)'.

As for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it is obvious that he had graced this world as the blessed substantiation of the perfect universal man. Standing firm was his natural habit. But then, why was it that he felt its weight to be so conspicuous and telling upon him? Perhaps, it was because the verse did not ask him to stand firm in an absolute sense, instead, asked him that this act of standing firm should be as commanded by Allah. How overwhelming is the fear and awe prophets have of their creator and master is well recognized. It must have been the effect of this fear and awe that, despite having his perfect stance of firmness, he was still concerned whether or not he had been able to come up with the kind of firmness and rectitude expected by his master, the most exalted Allah.

And it is also possible that he was not that concerned about his personal stance of firmness, because he, by the grace of Allah, had it in him. But, there was something else to it. In this verse, the command

given to him was also given to the entire Muslim Ummah. So, it was his realization that his Ummah may find it difficult to stand firm as commanded that made him sad.

After the command to stand firm, it was said: وَلَا تَطْغَوْا (and do not cross the limits). This word is a derivation from the verbal noun: طغيان (*ṭughyān*) which means to cross limits, and which is the opposite of standing firm. It will be noticed that the positive statement to stand firm in the verse has not been considered sufficient, rather, its negative aspect, that of its prohibition, was clarified expressly. This establishes the sense of the verse: 'do not cross the limits set by Allah and His Rasūl – in beliefs, acts of worship, transactions, morals etc. – for it was the outlet of all disorder and corruption in material and religious life.

To keep human beings protected from this disorder and corruption, another guideline has been provided in the second verse (113): وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ (And do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should catch you). The word: لَاتَرْكَنُوْا (*lā tarkanū*) comes from the verbal noun ركون : Rukūn which means a slight tilt towards one side having confidence in and approval of it. Therefore, the sense of the verse is: 'Whoever indulges in injustice and oppression ruins his or her life, worldly and spiritual both – this is a fact every one knows. But, the slightest of tilt or inclination towards the unjust, placing confidence in them, being pleased with them, could also push man to the edges of the same abyss.'

What is the meaning of this 'tilt' and 'inclination'? There are some statements of Ṣaḥābah (Companions) and Tābi'īn (Successors) about it in which there is no contradiction or difference. They are all correct in their respective places.

Sayyidnā Qatādah said, it means, 'do not have friendship with the unjust and do not follow what they say.' Ibn Jurayj said, 'do not nurse a leaning of any kind towards the unjust.' Abū al-'Āliyah said, 'do not like everything they do.' (Qurṭubī) Al-Suddiyy said, 'do not court the favor of the unjust through servile flattery (*mudāhanah*), that is, do not observe silence or show your approval at their evil deeds.' 'Ikrimah said, 'do not sit in the company of the unjust.' Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī said, 'following them in personal looks, fashion, and ways of living are all included under this very prohibition.'

Qādī al-Baidāwī also said that this verse exudes the highest imaginable degree of severity in the matter of prohibition and unlawfulness of injustice and oppression. The reason is that it not only prohibits friendship, and all other cordial relationships, with the unjust but, going farther ahead, it also prohibits the least possible inclination towards them, or even sitting with them.

Imām 'Abdur-Rahmān ibn 'Amr Al-Awzā'ī said, 'with Allah Ta'ālā no one is as detested as the 'Ālim (religious scholar) who, for the sake of his worldly interest, goes to meet someone unjust. (Mazharī)

According to Tafsir al-Qurtubī, this verse tells us that it is obligatory (*wājib*) to abstain from the company of those who disbelieve (*kāfirs*), those who disobey (sinners) and those who innovate in the established religion (practitioners of *bid'ah*) – unless they have to be met under some compulsion. The truth of the matter is that company and social setting play a major role in one's betterment or corruption. Therefore, the famous Hasan al-Basrī said about the two words of these two verses that Allah Ta'ālā has compressed the entire religion within the two letters: لا (*lā*: do not). The first one appears in the first verse: لَا تَطْغَوْا (*lā tatghaw*: do not cross the limits – 112) and the second one appears in the second verse: لَا تَرْكَنُوْا (*lā tarkanū*: And do not incline towards the wrongdoers – 113). The first '*la*' or 'do not' prohibits the crossing of the limits set by the Sharī'ah of Islām while the other prohibits the company of wrongdoing people – and this is the essence of the whole religion.

Verses 114 – 123

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَسَنٰتِ
يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ۚ ذٰلِكَ ذِكْرٰى لِلذّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوْا بَقِيَّةٍ يَّنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا
قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مَآ أُتْرِفُوْا فِيْهِ
وَكَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ
وَّأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً

وَّاحِدَةً وَّلَا يَزَالُوْنَ مُخْتَلِفِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ
وَلِذٰلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ
وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۹﴾ وَكُلًّا نَّقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الرُّسُلِ
مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ وَجَآءَكَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَّذِكْرٰى
لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى
مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنَّا عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ وَانْتَظِرُوْا اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾
وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْاَمْرُ كُلُّهٗ فَاعْبُدْهُ
وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾

And establish *ṣalāh* at both ends of the day, and in the early hours of the night. Surely, good deeds erase bad deeds. That is a reminder for the mindful. [114]

And be patient, for Allah lets not the reward of the good-doers be lost. [115]

Then, why is it that there was none, among the generations before you, having some remnants (of wisdom) to stop people from creating disorder in the land, except a few among them whom We saved? And the wrongdoers pursued the luxuries they were involved in, and they became sinners. [116]

And your Lord is not such that He would destroy the towns unjustly while their people are good in their ways. [117]

Had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community. But, they will continue in their differences, [118] **except those whom Allah has blessed with mercy. And for that He has created them. And perfect is the word of your Lord: "I will surely fill the hell with Jinns and the human beings, all together."** [119]

And We narrate to you everything from the events of the messengers with which We strengthen you heart. And herein there has come to you the truth, a good counsel and a reminder to those who believe. [120]

Say to those who do not believe, "Do whatever you can. We are doing (what we can). [121] **And wait. We are**

waiting." [122]

And to Allah belong the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and to Him the whole matter shall be returned. So worship Him and have trust in Him. And your Lord is not unaware of what you do. [123]

Commentary

The diction of the Qur'ān points out to the great station the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم occupies

It would be recalled that following the description of awe-inspiring events relating to past prophets and their peoples in Sūrah Hūd, some instructions have been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his community that begin from the previous verse (112): فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ (So, stand firm – as you have been commanded). In these instructions, the beauty and eloquence of the Holy Qur'ān stands out as highly educative. It will be noticed that a positive command to do something has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his community included therein as a corollary. Examples are as follows: فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ (So, stand firm – as you have been commanded – you and those who have repented with you – 112) and أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ (And establish *ṣalāh* – 114) and then: وَاصْبِرْ (And be patient – 115). But, when something was prohibited and instruction was given to abstain from it, the address was beamed at the Muslim community directly, for instance: لَاتَطْغَوْا (and do not cross the limits – 112) and: لَاتَرْكَنُوْآ إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا (And do not incline towards the wrongdoers – 113).

If we were to look at this in depth, it will be realized that it happens to be the general form used throughout the Qur'ān whereby a positive imperative has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while the negative imperative of prohibition to the Muslim community. This is an indication towards his high station. It tells us that things worth leaving off are things the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself abstained from. Allah Ta'ālā had made his elemental nature tuned so right that he would simply not incline towards any desire or thing that was evil. The limit was that things that were permissible and *ḥalāl* (lawful) during the early period of Islām – but, their becoming *ḥarām* (unlawful) later was already settled in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā – were things he never went near, even when they were *ḥalāl*, such as, liquor, interest, gambling etc.

In this verse (114), addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he and his entire Ummah has been commanded to establish *ṣalāh*. Scholars of Tafsīr among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn concur that 'صلوة: *ṣalāh*' at this place means obligatory prayers (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, al-Qurṭubī) and the '*iqāmah* of *ṣalāh*' means establishing and implementing it fully and faithfully and being constantly regular with it. Some have said that it means performing Ṣalāh with due consideration of all its inherent rules of etiquette. Some others have said that it means performing Ṣalāh at its most preferred time. These reflect the three positions taken in the Tafsīr of the verse: أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ (*aqimi 'ṣ-ṣalāh*: establish the prayer). The truth of the matter is that there is not much of a difference in there. Everything said here is included in the sense of 'establishing the prayer'.

Following the command to establish Ṣalāh, the statement about its timings appears briefly as: 'and establish Ṣalāh at both ends of the day [at the beginning and at the end], and in the early hours [parts] of the night.' Here, "زُلَفًا" (*zulafan*) is the plural of زُلْفَة (*zulfah*) which means a part or unit. As for the prayer 'at both ends of the day,' there is a consensus of revered early commentators that the prayer at the first end is the Ṣalāh of Fajr. However, the prayer at the last end has been taken by some of them as the Ṣalāh of Maghrib for it is almost at the end of the day. But, some others have taken the Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr as the prayer at the last end because that is the last prayer of the day. The time of Maghrib is not a part of the day, rather, comes after the passage of the day. Then, the text's: زُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ that is, 'prayers during parts of the night,' have been declared as referring to the Ṣalāh of Maghrib and 'Ishā' by the majority of early commentators Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, Muḥammad ibn Ka'b, Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk and others. And a Ḥadīth which says that زُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ (prayers during parts of the night) are Maghrib and 'Ishā' confirms it. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

When the text's: طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ (at both ends of the day) means the Ṣalāh of Fajr and 'Aṣr, and زُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ (in the early hours or parts of the night) the Ṣalāh of Maghrib and 'Ishā,' the timings of four prayers find mention in the verse. What remains to be mentioned is the Ṣalāh of Ẓuhr which appears in another verse: أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ (Establish *ṣalāh* at the decline of the sun – 17:78).

After the command to establish Ṣalāh, and its timings, the text

points out to the great good these bring. It was said: إِنَّ الْحَسَنٰتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ (Surely, good deeds erase bad deeds). Early commentators have said that *'al-hasanāt'* means all good deeds. These include Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Zakāh, Ṣadaqāt, good morals, good dealings etc., but Ṣalāh takes precedence over all of them. Similarly, *'as-saiyyi'āt'* covers all bad deeds, *kabīrah* (major sins) or *ṣaghīrah* (minor sins). But, there is another verse of the Qur'ān, as well as, several sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, where it has been particularized with *ṣaghīrah* sins, according to which, it would mean that good deeds – Ṣalāh being the superior most – become the *kaffārah* (expiation) of *saghīrah* sins which stand erased. This verse of the Qur'ān says: إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ (If you abstain from the major [sins] out of what you have been forbidden from, We shall write off your minor sins – Al-Nisā' 4:31) (See Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume II, pages 405-410 under 4:31 for a detailed discussion of the nature of *kabīrah* and *ṣaghīrah*)

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that five prayers and a Jumu'ah until the next Jumu'ah, and a Ramaḍān until the next Ramaḍān, become the *kaffārah* (expiation) of all sins committed in between them. This is subject to the condition that the person concerned has remained safe from major sins (*kabā'ir*). It means that major sins are such that they are not forgiven without Taubah (repentance). But, minor sins do get to be forgiven automatically when one keeps doing other good deeds such as Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ṣadaqah etc. However, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ has reported the saying of authentic scholars of the Principles of the Sharī'ah of Islām that even minor sins are forgiven by doing good deeds only when one feels ashamed of having done these and makes a solemn resolve of not doing these in the future. It is important that one does not insist on them. There are many events mentioned in Ḥadīth reports to the effects that sins were so erased. They too state clearly that this happens on condition that the sinner is ashamed of his doing, repents and resolves not to do it in future. It was on this basis that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given the good news of forgiveness of a sin to a sinner. Allah knows best.

The following have been declared as *kabā'ir* or major sins in well known Ḥadīth reports:

(1) Ascribing anyone as partner or equal in the Being or Attributes

of Allah Taʻālā.

(2) Intentionally skipping an obligatory (*farḍ*) Ṣalāh.

(3) Killing someone unjustly.

(4) Committing fornication or adultery.

(5) Stealing.

(6) Drinking.

(7) Disobedience to parents.

(8) Taking false oaths.

(9) Giving false witness.

(10) Practicing magic.

(11) Transacting interest.

(12) Usurping the property of the orphan by unfair means.

(13) Deserting the battlefield in Jihād.

(14) Accusing chaste women falsely.

(15) The taking of someone's property or wealth by unfair means.

(16) Breaking a pledge.

(17) Committing a breach of trust.

(18) Using foul language against anyone.

(19) Accusing someone as a criminal unjustly, etc.

Details about major and minor sins appear in standard books written by Muslim scholars. It can also be seen in 'Sin *sans* Taste' (*Gunāh-i-bay-Ladhdhat*) a treatise written by this humble writer.

In short, this verse proves that sins are also forgiven by doing good deeds. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'after a bad deed gets to be committed by you, do a good one and it will erase its evil;' and he said, 'deal with people pleasantly.' (Ibn Kathīr with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad)

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī said, 'I requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to order me to do something. He said, 'if you fall into some sin, do some good deed after that, so that it erases the sin.'

In fact, these Aḥādīth tell us about the preferred method of repent-

ing from a sin. This is as it has been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'if a Muslim unfortunately falls into some sin, he should make *wuḍū* and offer two *raka'āt* of *nafl* prayer – that sin will be forgiven. (All *riwāyāt* have been taken from Ibn Kathīr) This prayer is known by the very name of Ṣalātu-t-Taubah (the prayer of repentance).

In the last sentence of the verse (114): ذلك ذكرى للذ كرين (That is a reminder for the mindful), the word: ذلك (*dhālik*) could be referring to the Holy Qur'ān, and to the do's and don'ts both, which have been mentioned earlier. The sense is that this Qur'ān, or its injunctions referred to above, are guidance and good counsel for those who listen to and are used to obeying it. The hint embedded here is that a person, who is so compulsively obstinate that he would just not think about anything reasonable, remains deprived of every guidance.

In verse 115, it was said: واصبر فان الله لايضيع اجرالمحسنين (And be patient, for Allah lets not the reward of the good-doers be lost).

Literally, صبر (*ṣabr*) means to tie. Therefore, in usage, Ṣabr is also used to carry the sense of keeping one's naughty self in control. Also included within its sense is the effort made to keep one's self firm and unflinching when it comes to doing what is good and right, as well as the effort to check and hold it back from getting involved with bad deeds. At this place, asking the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to be patient could also mean that the injunctions given to him in the cited verses – for example, 'stand firm,' 'establish *ṣalāh*,' etc. – are things he should hold fast to. And it is also possible that the purpose may be to exhort him to be patient in the face of the hostility of enemies and the pains caused by them. As for what was said after that – 'Allah lets not the reward of the good-doers be lost' – it obviously suggests that '*al-muḥsinīn*' (good-doers) are people who faithfully observe the injunctions of do's and don'ts as given in the cited verses. In other words, they are firm in their religion, adhere to the limits set by the Sharī'ah, maintain no friendly relations with the unjust unnecessarily, are punctual with their Ṣalāh, offering it as its etiquette demands, at the most preferred timings, and that they stand firm on all religious injunctions.

The essence of what has been said above is what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself said while defining 'Iḥsān' – "obey and wor-

ship Allah Ta'ālā as if you are seeing Him or, at the least, that Allah Ta'ālā is seeing you." When one achieves this station of the certitude of the Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, all words and deeds that issue forth from him become automatically correct. Worth remembering are the three truisms that were so popularly recognized among the revered scholars of the early centuries of Islām (*as-salaf*). These they used to exchange in writing to each other (as if they were souvenirs worth saving). They said:

(1) Anyone who gets busy working for the 'Ākhirah (life-to-come), Allah Ta'ālā takes it upon Himself to put his worldly chores in order and sees to it that they come out right for him.

(2) Anyone who corrects his inward state of being, (so much so that he moves the orientation of his heart away from everything and turns it towards Allah Ta'ālā) He sees to it that his outward state of being stands corrected all by itself.

(3) Anyone who puts his matter with Allah Ta'ālā sound and correct, Allah Ta'ālā Himself corrects all matters pertaining to him and to those he relates with. The original wording of these three truisms is being given below:

وكان اهل الخير يكتب بعضهم الى بعض بثلاث كلمت، من عمل لاخرته
كفاه الله امر دنياه، ومن اصلح سريرته اصلح الله علانيته ومن اصلح فيما
بينه، وبين الله اصلح الله مابينه وبين الناس (تفسير روح البيان ج ٢ ص ١٣١)

(Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān, p. 131, v. 2)

Given in the third and the fourth verse (116, 117) is the reason why Divine punishment came upon past peoples as well as the instruction as to how they could have stayed safe from it. It was said: How sad that among them there could have been at least some good and wise people who would have stopped their erring fellowmen from spreading disorder. The exception was that of a counted few who followed the noble prophets and they were the ones who stayed safe from the punishment. As for the rest of them, they went for the luxuries of the material world and turned into compulsive sinners.

In this verse, people of discernment, balance and foresight have been identified through the expression: اولوا بقية: 'remnants [of wisdom].' The word: بقيه (*baqīyyah*) means that which remains. It is human habit

that one lets what is most dear to him remain with him under all conditions, preserved and retrievable. When some need would arise, he would give away everything but not that. Therefore, reason and insight are called '*baqīyyah*' or remnants, because that is the dearest one has.

It was said in the fourth verse (117) that Allah does not destroy towns and habitations unjustly while people living there are good in their ways, that is, they are believing Muslims. The sense is that the probability of injustice and oppression does not exist with Allah Ta'ālā. Those destroyed deserve being destroyed. Some early commentators have said that the word: ظلم :'*ẓulm*' (injustice) in this verse means *shirk* (ascribing of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah) and مُصْلِحُوْن:'*muṣliḥūn*' (people good in their ways) refers to people who, despite being Mushriks and Kāfirs, are good in morals and dealings, do not hurt and cause pain to anyone, do not lie and do not cheat. Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that the punishment of the world does not fall on a people simply because of their being Mushriks and Kāfirs – unless they were to spread disorder in the land by their very deeds and morals. The cause of all punishments that came upon the past peoples was but their particular evil deeds. The people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام caused him all sorts of pains. The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیه السلام spread disorder by weighing and measuring short. The people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام took to the worst type of evil act. The people of Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā oppressed their prophets. The Holy Qur'ān says that these very misdeeds were the reason why punishment came upon them. Divine punishment does not come in this world because of bland Kufr and Shirk. The everlasting punishment of the fire of Hell is its punishment. Therefore, some 'Ulama' have said that countries and governments can survive with Kufr and Shirk, but they cannot survive with injustice and oppression.

Difference: Blameworthy and Praiseworthy

When it was said in the fifth verse (118) – 'had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community' – the sense is that had it been the will of Allah, He would have made all human beings accept Islām by force. All of them would have then become nothing but Muslims without any difference remaining between them. But, such are the dictates of His wisdom that, in this world, Allah Ta'ālā does

not compel anyone to do something. Instead, He has entrusted man with a kind of choice under which he could do whatever good or bad he wishes to do. Then, human temperaments differ, ways differ and deeds differ. The outcome is that there always will be some people who would keep at loggerheads against the true faith – of course, with the exception of those whom Allah Ta'ālā has blessed with His mercy, that is, those who have been following the noble prophets.

This tells us that 'difference' at this place means hostility and opposition to the true faith and the teachings of prophets. The difference based on Ijtihād, which is inevitable among religious authorities and jurists of Islam, an ongoing process since the period of the Ṣaḥābah, is not included under this purview, nor is it contrary to Divine mercy. In fact, it is the very dictate of Allah's wisdom and mercy. Those who have declared the differences among Mujtahid Imāms to be counter to Mercy in terms of this verse, have done something which is itself counter to the context of this verse as well as counter to the consistent practice of the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn.

وَاللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهٗ وَتَعَالٰى اَعْلَمُ

And Allah is Pure and High and He knows everything best.

Alhamdulillāh

The Commentary on

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